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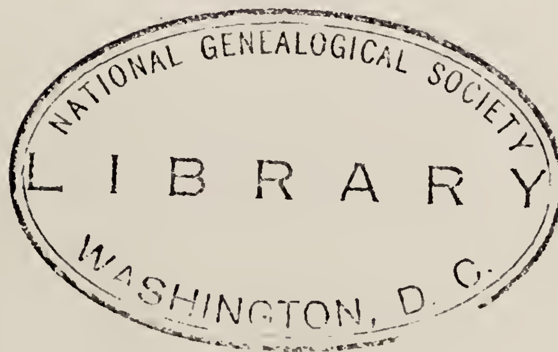
FAMILY PORTRAIT: 1840-1890

Virginia-Carolina Puritans
Drawn from
their Letters

W. B. C. Watkins



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A FAMILY PORTRAIT

by

W. B. C. WATKINS

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Watkins, Walter Barker Critz
Family portrait: 1840-1890· Va.-
Carolina Puritans, drawn from thei
letters

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DEDICATION

My son, W. B. C. Watkins, was in poor health the last years of his life and could not have his book published. We, his father and brother, are having it lithoprinted as a memorial to

Walter Barker Critz Watkins--1907-1957

the most versatile and brilliant member of the family.

PREFACE

Violating the privacy of a family (for certainly none of these letters were intended for other eyes, and Nathaniel Watkins expressly addresses his to his wife alone) requires explanation; all the more so since this was not a family in the public view; nor were the events which affected their lives during fifty critical years in American history so dramatic as if they had lived--say, in New Orleans, or Vicksburg, or Atlanta, or Charleston, instead of southside Virginia and North Carolina. The correspondence of great southern leaders and families of this period was long ago ransacked; and of late years the other side of the picture, too long neglected--the plain "Johnny Reb"--has been sharply sketched. But in between the two extremes was a large segment of people whose story has been slighted. What value this correspondence has, apart from its remarkable completeness, comes from its being typical of this provincial South, which it illuminates not in the glare of footlights so much as from the wings. This is very minor Tolstoy. Nathaniel Watkins, though three years in the Confederate army, took part in few battles, but he observed a great deal. Since he was alert and could be intelligently objective, many of his comments on soldier psychology and morale are applicable to any army. Temperamentally no soldier, like countless civilian volunteers in any war he served from duty only, hating the army and warfare, yearning for a substitute so that he could go back to his family and farm.

Furthermore, these letters, particularly those before 1860, are characteristically nineteenth century American, not merely southern. When in the 1830's the Rev. Elisha Ballantine comes down from New York State to attend a Virginia Presbyterian Seminary and marry into this Virginia family, one feels an extraordinary congruity of ideals and way of living; he has no real problem of adjustment. Even slavery he accepts--before 1860 at least. And the Ballantine letters from Indiana in the fifties and later, while providing interesting contrasts in education, social and political life, are really no more different from Virginia than the Louisiana, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas letters of other branches of the family.

Possibly I overstress "Puritan" in this portrait; it is more conspicuous than "Cavalier." Not all Presbyterians were Puritan, nor all southern Puritans Presbyterian. I do not mean a group of fanatic witch-burners (incidentally, a complete injustice to Massachusetts, where they were a terrible but small number only briefly prevailing).

But the Puritan tradition of our country, of the whole Anglo-Saxon and Huguenot heritage, with its grave faults and under-rated virtues, we interpret too narrowly and attribute too exclusively to New England Congregationalists. All the more does this seem likely when one realizes how heavily this one family, or group of related families, contributed to the peopling--not just of the Deep South and Southwest, but of what was then called "the West:" Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin. So far as one can generalize from these samples, most of the migrants, while preserving many old loyalties and affections and ideals, readily adapted themselves to new environments.

This correspondence is freighted with family consciousness, family loyalties, domestic scenes; I have tried to eliminate most of the tedious trivia while still preserving enough to keep proportion and give this flavor. Much of the atmosphere of these southern homes is typically Victorian—the rigid rules of conduct, the young ladies who never travel a mile without a gentleman escort, the flirtations and alliances, the prim gaiety of picnics and musicales and watering places, the strong religious preoccupation of the whole family circle. Miss Sarah Skinner, the New Englander who lived and taught for years in the Daniels' Carolina home, after she returns to Massachusetts matches their revival meetings with her account of the 11,000 recently converted in New England. She keeps in touch with her "southern friends" all during the Civil War and at its close promptly resumes her correspondence of twenty years.

But of paramount interest to us who are still trying to solve with equity the difficult problem of races is the day to day attitude of these average southerners toward slavery and their relations with Negroes. Letters like these have in a sense more authority than the brilliant Mrs. Chesnut, who wrote in her Diary with one eye on posterity; no one here dreamed of being overheard. These families were not large slaveholders; none owned more than fifty and most between twenty and thirty slaves (they avoid the word, speaking usually of "servants" and "hands," depending on indoor or outdoor work). In condensing this enormous mass of letters I have carefully preserved every reference of the slightest importance to Negroes; for this is their portrait and a chapter in their history too. They are, with one reservation, explicitly part of the family, for Nathaniel Watkins writes in 1862:

> I wish all of my negroes to understand distinctly that as long as they behave themselves I will consider them as members of my family, and will part with any & all my property before I would sell a single one; but if they make it necessary, I will not hesitate, & will have no scruple about selling.

White members of the family were not so drastically on good behavior. The most pathetic letters here are from a group of Carolina ex-slaves

stranded in Tennessee in the late seventies:

> Please Miss Nannie answer this as soon as you get it. We are so anxious to hear from you all & it would be such a comfort to us to get a letter from you, for we feel like you are [more] nearly kin to us than any other white person in the world. . . .

These letters, though of course only a partial picture, throw much light on how the Negroes were treated before the War, what they were doing during the War; and how after Surrender their fate varied from place to place in the same neighborhood. Some remained where they were, out of loyalty and affection or insecurity; some wandered away in joyful independence or sheer confusion—to drift back later or disappear for good; some were driven off. I have concealed nothing, discreditable or commendable, that these letters reveal.

Two chapters here require explanation if not apology. The brief chronicle (I, ii) of this family's origin and the history of Prince Edward County, Virginia, in which they shared is essential to understand how Americans who had been in the vanguard of the movement for independence from England could retain their fierce love of liberty as owners of slaves. None of the Adamses or Hancocks, the Hamiltons or Livingstons, the Morrises or Rushes, but three Virginians, Jefferson, Madison and Mason, fought hardest to free the new Republic from bartering and owning slaves; yet two generations later Virginians had lost control of the problem even in their own minds. The second chapter (III, iii) recounts Nathaniel Watkins' farming operations in a brief distillation of the hundreds of pages he left on the subject. But it is worthy of note that, while no John Taylor of Caroline or Edmund Ruffin, an obscure, impoverished southern farmer in 1877 should have his essay on grasses and forage crops read before a national agricultural society at Cooper's Institute in New York City. For Nathaniel realized that not slaves or houses or money but the land itself was the true heritage. This unheroic soldier became a most heroic farmer, passionately intent on realizing his vision of the soil's fertility conserved and restored. It was no fault of Nathaniel's that his farm, Brookland, is now a waste of eroded fields and blighted orchards.

By a series of accidents, Brookland was in turn closely associated with the Reads, the Daniels, the Watkinses; consequently I have made it one of the unifying threads to give coherence to this bundle of letters. Other threads of continuity in what is by circumstance a miscellaneous survival I have reinforced, at times deliberately resorting to repetition and risking redundance for the sake of clarity. Crucial gaps remain and always will in cases of this kind.

With the exception of a few letters, some of them generously lent by Miss Mary Dupuy, this correspondence, after knocking around for years in old attic trunks, was given to the Library of William and

Mary College by Mrs. J. F. Morton, Mr. R. H. Watkins, and Mrs. R. L. Morton, in the hope that such an accumulation of minutiae might prove useful in the footnotes of future historians. No single individual here writes letters of sufficient distinction to justify a book; yet taken together this correspondence gives a remarkable composite portrait of a family group—what the eighteenth century called a Conversation Piece—really a series of portraits, for these letters show the changes wrought by the passage of nearly fifty years.

Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.

W. B. C. Watkins.

Laurel, Mississippi,
January 15, 1950.

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PART ONE: SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, 1840-1860

Chapter I. Puritan Virginia

Farmville on the Appomattox River in the northeast corner of Prince Edward County, Virginia, is a pleasant and prosperous little town, like many similar towns in the south serving a large rural community. Old inhabitants will point out the Randolph House, near the banks of the river, where General Lee rested briefly in the early morning of April seventh, and General Grant, a few hours later, established over-night headquarters, as they moved towards Appomattox Court House, forty miles distant, and the final scenes of April 9, 1865. There was a small settlement for river trading here as early as 1798, but the town is not old. It grew with the coming of the Norfolk and Western Railroad in the eighteen fifties. Moving the county seat here twenty years later from old Prince Edward Courthouse, seven miles away symbolized the capitulation, long resisted, to a new era.

With the loss of the courthouse, Worsham has dwindled to a few houses huddled against time at a crossroads bristling with historical markers, practically all that remains of two centuries of active colonial and national life. To the left is Providence, sagging in boxwood; to the right Slate Hill, the most famous home in Prince Edward, though never more than a plain frontier house. These surrounding acres belonged originally to Joseph Morton, then to his brother-in-law, "Baron" Woodson, by him given in dower to his daughter Elizabeth Woodson Venable. Poor land, most of it; yet it supported a ramifying clan for a hundred fifty years. Four sons who became officers of the Revolution were born here to Joseph Morton and his wife Agnes Woodson before they moved to richer acres in neighboring Charlotte in 1755, turning over Slate Hill to Nathaniel Venable, who also made history here,* besides with his fourteen children settling three counties and a respectable portion of a dozen states.

Farther west along the highway toward Keysville in a fine grave of trees are the blackened ruins of Marble Hill, a Purnell-Dupuy place. And a little beyond is a circuit of some ten square miles isolated from the railroad, bypassed by the new highways, cut off at times in rainy weather by creeks flooding through deep red gullies. These rolling hills now reverting in part to woodland are spotted with once

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*Three of Nathaniel Venable's sons born at Slate Hill also became officers of the Revolution—making Slate Hill's total seven.

flourishing farms and fine old houses, most of them softly rotting among the trees—Linden, Falkland, Chestnut Hill, Shenstone, Oldham, homes of Dupuys, Mortons, Redds, Watkinses.

But the markers at Worsham crossroads do not all point to homes connected with the Revolution and Civil War, to Tarleton's raids and skirmishes of the long retreat to Appomattox. For this was a center of religion and education and culture in southside Virginia, and all has not dwindled to dust. One marker by an open field commemorates the Medical School set up here in 1837 by Dr. John Peter Mettauer. The Presbyterian Union Theological Seminary, established nearby in 1822, has been moved to Richmond. But Hampden-Sydney College founded by Prince Edward and Charlotte families in 1776 two miles from the old Court House is still very much alive. In the fourth volume of Who's Who (1929) Hampden-Sydney had the highest percentage of living graduates of any college in the country, followed by Amherst, Harvard, and Wesleyan.

The name and the date are keys to the tradition of southside Virginia, a tradition once all-powerful, still strong. That rebels against British tyranny in the third quarter of the eighteenth century should invoke the spirit of John Hampden and Algernon Sydney, those champions of Parliamentary government and religious freedom under the Stuarts, shows how in this country the spirit of the seventeenth century lived into the eighteenth.

The frontiersmen who began seeping into the upper Piedmont around 1735 rapidly took on an identity of their own, distinct alike from Tidewater region to the east and the great valley to the west, soon to be irrigated by a river of Scots-Irish from Pennsylvania. Among them were a few younger sons from the James River, yet they were mostly Quakers, Huguenots, dissenters, disaffected or neglected Anglicans, whose common denominator was a strict code of conduct and a passion to run their own affairs. They were not Scots-Irish, but English, Welsh, and French in blood.

Their Presbyterianism was a tribute to the vitality of Princeton College and the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the eighteenth century. Among the dozens of evangelists sent out from the college in the early 1750's was Samuel Davies, who covered southside Virginia on horseback. His eloquent zeal was the catalytic agent resolving these noncomformist Quakers and Huguenots, and some Anglicans, into a common faith. Presbyterianism soon dominated the whole region. Typical was Joseph Morton, a staunch Anglican, who swore that he would not have that heretic under his roof at Slate Hill, but relented when his wife pointed out that to turn away a stranger is unchristian. One night was enough for Samuel Davies to convert him, doubtless with Mrs. Morton's help. She was a Woodson and her mother a Huguenot Michaux whose parents had fled Europe to preserve their Calvinism.

Using England as a rough analogy, we may say that the group of families settling this region were primarily yeoman in origin, with a few men of substance. All had reached America by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Woodsons and Watkinses first. Dr. John Woodson, a surgeon and graduate of St. Johns, Oxford, arrived from Bristol in 1619 and settled soon after opposite Curles Neck on the James at Fleur-de-Hundred. Henry Watkins of Henrico was born across the river near Malvern Hill and Turkey Island in 1638. When they moved down through Cumberland into the Piedmont the Woodsons, already considerable landowners, and the Watkinses, of smaller means, joining with Mortons, Venables, Daniels, Dupuys, Reads, Carringtons to open up a new frontier, gradually evolved into a kind of squierarchy or country gentry, distinct from the Tidewater aristocrats and from the poor farmers. They never achieved the prominence of that branch of the Randolphs who followed them from Turkey Island into Prince Edward and Charlotte Counties; yet they and their kind became the backbone of a whole region extending from Prince Edward and Charlotte into Granville County just over the North Carolina line. By 1850 their branches reached not only, as one would expect, down into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and out through Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, but also up through Kentucky and Ohio into Indiana, Illinois, and across the Continent to California.

Their social background was nearer to Peter Jefferson or Patrick Henry, another neighborhood celebrity, than to John Randolph of Roanoke or the wealthy, landed Bruces of Charlotte. To their type Thomas Jefferson looked for support and got it, though except for the brief flush of the Revolution few of them were as radical as Jefferson. It is characteristic of their eighteenth century status that when Captain Thomas Watkins left Hampden-Sydney College to organize and offer the services of the Prince Edward Dragoons against the British, the aristocratic Lee scorned them as backwoodsmen, which they were. Later he changed his mind, but the Prince Edward Dragoons had their pride, too. They indignantly refused Lee and served instead under Nathaniel Greene, who though a New Englander was more their kind.

A frontier plainness of living lingered in Prince Edward and Charlotte even after the countryside became settled and many of the families moderately well-to-do, though this was perhaps partly owing to the strict moral tradition. At any rate social life in southside Virginia became a curious mixture of elegance and austerity, gaiety and severity. Prince Edward, the seat of Hampden-Sydney College (also for half a century of the Seminary) and of Briery, one of the mother churches of the region, was naturally more austere than neighboring Charlotte, or Granville County over the border. Prince Edward was Puritan (though its brand of Puritanism was gentle without fanaticism) and went in strongly for plain living and high thinking; whereas

horse-racing and gambling went on in Charlotte and Granville. Prince Edward, however, was not devoid of fun, nor was the fun so rigorously repressed as in Presbyterian Scotland. Sherry or scuppernong wine and cake were correct for the calling minister. We find Patty Watkins shocked at the balls and tournaments in Charlotte three months after Lee's surrender; yet two months later her own brother was getting up a tournament in Prince Edward, where dances lasted till two a.m., where the punch had a way of being spiked on the sly (sharp-eyed, keen-nosed Susan suspects another brother there), where the medical students openly caroused.

The same difference is evident in the homes, those in Charlotte and Granville being usually more spacious, with touches of real elegance like the Adam mantels and paneling at Do-Well, the stairway at Campostella, the moulded ceilings at Waterloo; those in Prince Edward unpretentious and severe, except for a few like Longwood. Still, the characteristic tall silhouettes of Prince Edward houses are distinctive and pleasing. Gardens and boxwood were uninhibited, and there were accents of style incongruous with Puritanism, like the universal fondness for keeping peacocks. Most homes were built of timber and, isolated as they were, sooner or later many of them went up in smoke.

After a century of propinquity practically all the leading families were intricately enmeshed, for there were few but cousins to marry and plenty of those. Mortons, Venables, Watkinses, Reads, Carringtons, and the less prolific Gaineses were all kin to each other in at least three ways; Daniels, Dupuys, Egglestons, Bookers, Lewises, Boyds were almost as frequently crossed with them. For one instance of permeation, Colonel William Morton of Charlotte (1743-1820) and his wife, Susannah Watkins, had, besides three sons, ten marriageable daughters, all of whom married at least once (surely a triumph for old Susannah)—inevitably into nearly every family in southside Virginia. One of these daughters (Mildred Morton, wife of Henry N. Watkins, her second cousin and second husband) is the matriarch of these letters.

Such intermarriage was characteristic of the whole Atlantic Seaboard well into the nineteenth century, and made for distinct family types. Of this group the Reads and Carringtons were social and magnetic, the only ones who valued and achieved style. The Read ladies when calling even on relatives always dressed as if for Easter Sunday. The Venables went in for politics, national as well as local; they were solid and substantial, often a little ponderous and aware of their own importance. The Dupuys were practical, charitable, of admirable integrity. The Watkinses were gentle and stubborn, slow to anger yet subject sometimes to terrible rage, industrious, passionate and spiritual. Their uxoriousness made them highly prized as husbands.

Family solidarity in the South (and in parts of New England and the

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Middle Atlantic States) is too often dismissed as ancestor worship, which undoubtedly it sometimes is; but it is also an abiding concern with people and places, customs and codes of conduct. Southerners have a deep sense of historical continuity, and of course for these Presbyterians that was also the theological equivalent of the Anglican and Roman Apostolic Succession.

With families unblessed by genius the tradition is more oral than written, and what was written is usually destroyed or lost. Ten years ago the letters of this particular family went back to the War of 1812; now there is nothing earlier than 1840 left, except deeds to land. Unquestionably family stories, varied in character and by no means strictly accurate, make the past a living thing to each new generation as no text book can.

In this group the Read stories are mainly concerned with Colonel Clement's wife (1712-1786), who for her arrogance was always known as "Madame Read" of Bushy Forest; with her ceremonious entrances and exits; with her confusion during the Revolution, when she hid alternately in the cellar, according to the complexion of the troops in the neighborhood, her portrait of George Washington or that of George the Third. But such hauteur had little appeal to children, more impressed by tangible relics, like the sword of the Dupuys brought from France or the faded splendor of great-great-grandfather Daniel's canary yellow coach with red morocco upholstery, imported from England. The Daniel connection through the Lewises meant to these youngsters direct participation in founding the United States, since George Washington was a double cousin, however far removed in time. Even more important, Meriwether Lewis was a triple cousin. He seemed more real than Washington, like a member of the family who had just died mysteriously after exploring a continent's wilderness.

But the Woodson Huguenot and Indian stories, more earthy and colorful, were the favorites. There was grandmother Suzanne Rochet, "the little Nightcap," who was smuggled from France to her parents in Holland hidden in a hogshead, and was later presented with a Bible by Queen Elizabeth before sailing to the new world. Or the widow Woodson, caught alone with her two small boys in her cabin during an Indian massacre: one she popped into the potato hole, the other into the washpot (hence the distinction "wash-pot" and "potato-hole" for the subsequent two branches of Woodsons), then barricaded the door. The Indian who climbed down the chimney landed in a big caldron which she had thoughtfully prepared for them in the fireplace. A bloodier version has her brain them with the iron spit.

Naturally time blurs such oral traditions. Suzanne Rochet actually arrived in this country about 1702; but her Bible is deposited in Richmond, only, if it was a royal gift the queen was Anne not Elizabeth. And Dr. John Woodson was killed by the Indians in 1644, being

survived by his widow and two small sons, whether secreted with such presence of mind or not. Historical truth has robbed the Watkinses of their greatest pride—a kind of inverted snobbishness—their supposed descent from James Watkins, a common seaman who came over with Captain John Smith in 1607. What more suitable beginning for an American family than a common seaman in 1607? James, unaware of this responsibility, returned to England for good the following year, leaving no son behind him.

The Watkinses, writers of these letters, are the simplest, least pretentious of all this group, calling themselves farmers, rarely "planters." Henry Watkins of Henrico (1638-1714) had been sometime toward the end of the 17th century converted to Quakerism. Thereafter his family, though they did not have to worship in cellars or priest-holes like English Catholics, were penalized in various ways for not belonging to the Established Church. They were ineligible for royal land grants, such as Joseph Morton's. While, like any Virginia family which happened to arrive soon enough, they have on the distaff side dozens of burgesses acquired by osmosis, only two Watkinses—Henry of Henrico's (putative) father and his grandson Benjamin—ever served in the House of Burgesses.

Henry of Henrico was a pertinacious and shrewd man, and, luckily for him, a surveyor at a time when the profession was at a premium. He managed to accumulate 660 acres by 1690. This holding, quite respectable for 17th century Virginia, he divided, as was the family custom, among his five sons. Only one of them, Thomas of Swift Creek, seemed to inherit his father's shrewdness; without benefit of land grants, he increased the 200 acres deeded him in 1691 to 2000 by 1747. It is doubtful if any Watkins of this branch was ever again so strikingly acquisitive, though considering that each generation had to fend for itself several have done fairly well. As a family they have been unwordly, remarkably disinterested in material success, a virtue with the defect of frequent inaptitude for business affairs. Characteristic of the breed is one of Thomas of Swift Creek's grandsons, to whom his neighbor, John Randolph of Roanoke, paid this tribute—surprising from that brilliant old rascal:

> On Sunday, the 2nd day January, departed this life, at an advanced age, beloved, honored and lamented by all who knew him, Col. Joel Watkins, of the county of Charlotte and State of Virginia.
>
> Without shining abilities or the advantages of an education, by plain, straightforward industry, under the guidance of old-fashioned honesty and practical good sense, he accumulated an ample fortune, in which, it is firmly believed, there was not one dirty shilling.

And so we are concerned here with a typical provincial American family, redeemed from the ordinary by character, unusual

independence flashing at times into downright eccentricity by imagination and a creative spark which has manifested itself over several generations through various branches in a deal of amateur, and some professional, writing and painting; and by a vein of humor ranging from animal spirits through mischief to malice, incongruous in so gentle and charitable a clan. There is a vein of melancholy and moodiness, too, perhaps a Welsh heritage (Watkins, Davis, Lewis, Meriwether). Their greatest gift has been an absorbing love of people. Not social like their Read, Carrington, Daniel cousins, they are temperamentally sociable. Intense emotionalism has always given warmth to their relations with others.

The following excerpts are the typical voice of Henry N. Watkins (1787-1850), seventh generation American, head of this family, in many ways—his rusty attempts at formal prose, his fondness for the sententious phrase—a survivor of the 18th century. He was farmer and lawyer, veteran of 1812, trustee and elder of Briery, trustee of Hampden-Sydney College, father of six, step-father of one, guardian for some twenty minor children of friends and sisters untimely cut off. Only a handful of letters, to his two sons at Washington College, survive. They do not show the droll side of him remarked by his granddaughter; they do show the strong affection and generosity softening his austerity, a certain astringency, and a nice adjustment of his fatherly advice to his sons' differing temperaments:

> 1844—Dear Richard:
>
> You say it is thought throughout College that you will get the 1st or 2nd honor. I am sorry that you listen to the thoughts of other people about your merits. The man that flatters you to your face is but a small distance behind him who slanders you behind your back—Let your anxiety be to become well acquainted with your studies and then very careless about the honors. I have seen boys give themselves very ridiculous airs about the decision of the faculty in regard to their standing. . . .

His tone to the younger Nathaniel—at this time lazy, moody, extravagant, a little wild—is different:

> 1847—Dear Nathl.
>
> I have not written to you heretofore, not because you were out of my mind, for I am always anxiously thinking of you: but because others were writing to you. To hear of your good behaviour and your progress in learning would ever give me the highest delight.
>
> We are well and want money to pay our debts more than anything else, which I wish you to remember. We can barely send you to College with the greatest efforts. You will therefore use the money sent to promote your Education, and not expend it in Christmas Frolicks. I hope you will remember the duties of a Student and a Christian when there shall be a recess of College duties.

When you receive this letter please answer it, and when you shall want more money let me hear in time.

Your affectionate Father.

And this is his second son, Richard, the humorist of the family and the only one who in these casual letters essayed a literary flavor, which shows that, while the feudal Deep South may have been profoundly influenced by Sir Walter Scott (Scott is mentioned only once in all these letters) these southside Virginians were more indebted to writers like Sterne and Dickens.

Twice Richard was forced to journey south for his health, once to Cuba, and once in 1853 he crossed the mountains and went down the Ohio and Mississippi to visit on horseback relatives in Arkansas, where, as we shall see, he found "the scenes every night peculiarly rich."

Here is Susan Watkins, the second daughter. She was fundamentally a generous and devoted woman, but too critical to be altogether amiable. She was intelligent and amusing, inquisitive and emphatic. This is from Washington, D.C., where her eldest sister's husband, the Rev. Mr. Ballantine, was minister of the First Presbyterian Church at the time (1848):

My Dear Brother Nat,

With the utmost patience I have waited and waited four months for an answer to my letter and have finally come to the conclusion that you have forgotten that you have such a Sister, or which is more probable, think my letters not worth answering, yet I will not suffer you to forget me entirely and will occasionally send you a letter even though it may not be acceptable. You see I am in Washington yes! I am spending the winter in the City.

Yesterday was a general Holiday here, the only day in the year in which every person is at liberty to call on the President and Lady. I did not go as I have the pleasure of seeing them every Sunday [President and Mrs. Polk attended her brother-in-law's church]. Quite a number of Ladies called here who had been; they said there was a perfect squeeze nearly the whole day. Mr. Ballatine tried in the morning to get a hack for me to take a ride and could not get one for less than 5$ an hour. Of course my ride was postponed.

And Susan from Philadelphia in 1854, where Nathaniel had taken her to consult a specialist; for years after being thrown from a horse she had not walked:

Dr. Mettauer has been putting me off from time to time, till I have got heartily tired of everything here except him, his visits have been so few and far between. I have felt right impatient sometimes, first he had to take his Wife to Conn. and after his return

> had a violent attack of gout which kept him confined nearly a fortnight. Still I have improved much in walking, and when I know that I am improving can put up with many inconveniences . . . but I tell you I have to pay for it. After paying Mrs. Lloyd $40 and Dr. M. $50 I felt like going home, but Dr. says I *must* go to Cape May and I have to *obey*. . . .

Like Queen Victoria she found italics as essential to self-expression as breathing. Perhaps this outlay shocked her frugal soul, like the 5$ for the hack in Washington; perhaps the doctor's dilatoriness soured her; at any rate she did not care for Philadelphia, even though it gave her opportunity to attend with fine impartiality Quaker, Episcopalian, Presbyterian church services (wherever they happened to be, no member of the family ever passed up a sermon or display of oratory), even when she could enliven her stay by a kind of sightseeing common in the 18th and 19th centuries and hard for us to stomach:

> Dick, Mrs. James & I went Sat. to the Insane Hospital, saw only one sane person (a servant girl) after being shown around by one we thought sane. Mrs. J. asked him something about one of the patients and he said he had the honor of being a *resident graduate*, and seemed much excited on the subject.
>
> We left as soon as possible, then went to Independence Hall when a drunken Man offered to escort us around. Of course we declined his kindness, though such politeness is so rare in Philadelphia I felt half inclined to accept. . . .

The flick of sarcasm, the tendency to caricature, to italicize absurdities, all make Susan Watkins' letters easy to spot.

Perhaps chief of the mild charms of this kind of everyday family correspondence is the sudden breathless colloquial phrase and rhythm giving a sense of dramatic immediacy, of actual participation—such as Susan's ill-concealed excitement above: "You see I am in Washington yes! I am spending the winter in the *City*." All of this nonchalance about Presidential receptions and *levees*, about the funeral of John Quincy Adams and the orations of Clay and Webster, is assumed by Susan and Richard, two provincial southerners absolutely bug-eyed at capital activities. But the least traveled of the family, the youngest daughter, Patty, shows this excitement most frequently; her letters are completely artless, dashed off post-post-haste (the very handwriting shows that), and are filled with such spontaneous, usually unpunctuated ejaculations as these in the passages which I quote below—"Several of the officers came here one night & they sung oh it was so elegant;" "it sinks my spirits to hear about it;" "I could write you a book if I could just untangle it all" (she never took time to untangle anything); "for among 100 people who soon expect to be

500 it is very hard for one lone country girl to get along;" "my heart dies within me."

Patty was lovable, gay, utterly naive, full of zest for life, adoring society, she spent her youth without complaint nursing her invalid, widowed mother; her middle age nursing her twenty-years-older invalid husband and bringing up her one child. Her letters are crammed indiscriminately with family trivia in what brother Nathaniel called her "multum in parvo" style (he loved her and loved her letters, which told him exactly what he wanted to know—everything about everybody); they are warmly revealing and have some rich moments, conscious and unconscious. She excels in describing death scenes in semi-Biblical language and in unsparing detail, at once tearful and full of zest. Starved for society, especially of eligible young men, she is excited by the soldiers in 1863:

> We have lately had a Regiment of Cavalry from S. Carolina to stay a few days on Col. Dupuy's plantation, just between his house and here. It was a great curiosity to me as I had seen so few soldiers. We had a house full of them nearly all the time. They behaved very well and we formed some pleasant acquaintances. Mr. Redd & Col. Dupuy were both glad to have them move again, for there were some rogues among them.

And with characteristic empressment just after surrender, in June 1865:

> The Charlotte people have not been disturbed as the people have in this county & now they are having tournaments and balls up there. It sinks my spirits to hear about it. I could write you a book if I could just untangle it all. . . . Ma says I must tell you the vandals took every fowl Sister Maria had except one drake one gander & three peacocks. . . .

In 1868 the Military Occupation was arousing indignation and despair in bankrupt Prince Edward.

And this, in 1870, on one of her infrequent outings, from Rockbridge Alum Springs:

> Fannie Watkins came with me but the dress & fashions so disgusted her that she has left me & gone home. Mr. Scott is here too & I really don't know what I would do if he hadn't come, for among 100 people who soon expect to be 500 it is very hard for one lone country girl to get along. The whole country is represented from Massachusetts to Texas. . . .
>
> I went to the ball room last night for the first time. I don't think I shall go very often though it is a very great place of resort for everybody here. The round dances are the most disgusting sight I ever saw. I can't imagine how a lady a woman even could ever consent to dance it. . . . I haven't much to write here, for

> I am most of the time sleeping and dressing in my "old duds." I must go in the parlor now & see some of the ladies. . . .

Patty's letters show perhaps most clearly of all in their very style and rhythms the gradual passage of time. This was written fifteen years later (1885) from Charlotte County; in the intervening time she had married Mr. Scott over her family's protest (he was so much older and in ill health), been widowed and left with too many responsibilities and an exhausted though extensive farm:

> I have undertaken to carry on the farm and tend to Embry's business, at a time when, to keep the house and only attend to its duties properly, is rather more than a lone woman can do, so with a school in the house under my supervision I find sometimes that my heart dies within me. . . .
>
> Embry is tall & spare not at all strong, fond of writing & drawing and doesn't care much for farming operations. His Father was too old & infirm to take him about with him much & so he has been raised at my knees. . . . I have some beautiful roses, about 20 varieties. . . .

Flowers had always been a passion and were now her only relaxation. She lived to a great age, sitting out her last years white-haired, enormous, completely paralysed, vacant-eyed, finally cared for in her turn as tenderly by this son as she had so long cared for others.

The eldest of the family, Betsy Ann, has left too few letters really to portray more than the tribulations of a parson's wife and deep affection sharpened by long separation; but her daughter, Mary Ballantine is in many ways the best letter writer of the whole family. Elisha Ballantine was a Presbyterian minister who had come down from Schodack on the Hudson to study and afterwards teach at Hampden-Sydney Seminary. His health was bad; consequently throughout the forties he kept having to give up pulpits in Ohio and Washington City and return to a country church in Prince Edward, where preaching could be combined with a little "academy" for boys, and where his father-in-law, Henry N. Watkins, could help out with the growing family of children. The oldest, Mary and Henry, were born and raised in Prince Edward and, as we shall see, looked upon themselves as thorough Virginians; the younger group in Washington and Indiana (their Uncle Richard called these "the little Yankees"), where Mr. Ballantine went in the fifties to teach in the University of Bloomington.

The Ballantine children eventually scattered from Omro, Wisconsin, to Boston, Massachusetts; and one unmarried daughter, Anna, wound up teaching Negroes in Nashville at Fiske, where Nathaniel's son paid his respects to her in 1906 with a disregard of contemporary local custom greater than Mrs. Roosevelt's, for he was a southerner. One Ballantine grandson became Under-Secretary of the Treasury during

Mellon's tenure, another professor at Harvard. They roamed from India to Europe; when their mother died in 1873 Henry was in Germany, Willie in Beirut. They were indefatigable in pursuit of intellectual distinction. Susan Watkins, who had taught these nephews and nieces as children, makes fond but acid comments on their honors, which on this occasion included congratulatory letters from President Harrison and his wife:

> 1890—The letters of the President & Presidentess must be sent back to Mary. It is such a wonderful epoch in the history of our family I want you all to write & congratulate them. After all the letters they have gotten, anything I could write would be too tame to send & no sweet words of mine would do to put along with the odor of Attar of roses.

Mary Ballantine was a precocious little blue-stocking, by the time she was fourteen, taking over teaching the younger boys in her father's school their Latin and French. Her letters to her Uncle Nathaniel, only five years her senior and at that period also a school teacher, are affectionately intimate, maternal, at times delightfully patronising. When they first arrived in Indiana in 1854 she (seventeen) is homesick for Virginia and her mother's people among whom she grew up:

> I wish you could step in and see how comfortable we are fixed and how nicely we do get along without darkeys. I must confess though that I miss them sometimes. . . .
>
> I like the West tolerably Uncle Nat. The people are plain and kind but they are not Virginians. They don't shake hands and seem glad to see you when they meet you, but are not so stiff and precise as Yankees. . . . I wish you could come West to live but I reckon it wouldn't suit you—you are too fond of lying abed in the morning. . . .
>
> Christmas is almost here and I don't look forward to it with any anticipations at all—I have no Grandma's to go to. No Uncles and Aunts to make it pleasant to me and I don't feel as if I shall enjoy it much. I expect mine will be occupied in retrospection and a little pleasant fit of the blues.

But the intellectual, social and political ferment of the Midwest in the decade before the Civil War electrified her, as we shall see; soon she was won over completely. Nine months after this homesick letter she writes of her first Commencement at Indiana University, mainly a paean of praise of students intent on mastering their subjects—"I never saw education respected till I came West."

Mary Ballantine continues her letter in lighter vein, the sarcasm, caricature, taste for the absurd reminiscent of Aunt Susan:

> "So Tuesday night we all dressed in our party rigging and went

to the Campus where we heard a beautiful poem on "love and Song," from Rev. Sidney Dyer of Indianapolis, and then a long prosy speech, on Education (I believe, am not certain) from Judge Niles. We then proceeded in procession almost the whole audience, up main street at 10 o'clock, to the President's. He had an elegant supper, and after eating a few mouthfuls, and squeezing around, bowing and squealing in folks ears, and laughing at remarks we didn't hear, Ma and I made a move to leave, and before 1 o'clock the company had all retired.

After a year's graduate study at the University of Virginia, Mary's Uncle Nathaniel went out to Indiana to visit them and flirted with the idea of seeking a Professorship there himself. But he did not take his niece's advice about getting a western wife; his marriage to a third cousin, Nancy Venable Daniel of Granville, deflected what might have been another northern branch of the family. The bulk of these letters are written by Nathaniel Venable Watkins and his wife Nancy; and so they will become familiar enough soon enough. Besides, though Nathaniel was the literary member of the family and a voracious reader, neither he nor his wife liked to write letters; what they say is frequently of interest, seldom how they say it. And while their personalities emerge clearly they cannot be seized in short passages. If they dominate this book, it is only that they were recipients of most of the letters they did not write.

It is high time to turn to the letters themselves. Those not interested in provincial colonial history may do so at once by skipping the brief sketch in the following chapter of the rise of a typical Virginia family.

Chapter II. The Belligerent Quaker and Sons; Establishment of Briery, Hampden-Sydney, the United States

"One of the most interesting families in Virginia *from the point of economic, social and political development*," writes Mr. William Clayton Torrence (italics my own), "is the distinguished Watkins family, whose earliest positively identified ancestor was a resident of Henrico County, who was born about the year 1638, and who appears from the list of Heads of Families in Henrico in 1679 to have been living at that time in the vicinity of Turkey Island."* The history of

*The Watkins Family, Henrico County, Virginia: Beginning of Families, Part IV, William Clayton Torrence, William and Mary Quarterly, Volume 25. I have in this chapter drawn also on the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, on *Historic Slate Hill Plantation in Virginia*, by Dr. J.D. Eggleston, and on articles in the *Record of the Hampden-Sydney Alumni Association*.

his family's gradual rise—to no pinnacle of distinction like the Lees or Byrds, but to an eminently respectable role in their country's life—is typical of the great majority of colonial Virginians and interesting only as illustrating the development of a frontier community. Even the Virginia aristocrats of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were, with half a dozen exceptions, self-made men and proud of it. Where, one wonders, poring over all the coats-of-arms on so many frontispieces, are the descendants of those hundreds of Virginians who had to work off their passage money before striking out on their own? Did they, like the raw Tudor "aristocracy" of the previous century, marry the daughters and sole heiresses of the Wars of the Roses and assume the title?

The initial rungs of the ladder Henry Watkins climbed entirely by his own initiative; in later generations fortunate marriages helped. If, like some early Tidewater Virginians, his family had believed in the English custom of entailing property on the eldest son instead of dividing it equally in each generation, their history might have been different; but it would not have been the same family, since entail violates their whole conception of justice and independence.

Henry of Henrico's father, the Emigrant, has not been established beyond question; but it is virtually certain that he was the Henry Watkins who reached Virginia in 1620, was living on the Eastern Shore in 1623, being one of the handful who survived the Indian massacre at Berkeley the previous year.. He was overseer of Lady Dale's plantation and sat in the House of Burgesses in 1623-4. Leaving Lady Dale's employ about 1626, he seems to have moved up the James before 1630 to establish himself like so many others. "Henry Watkins his Creke" is mentioned in a deed (1634) to land in the neighborhood of Henry of Henrico's birthplace four years later. The very name "Malvern Hills" suggests interesting possibilities. Clearly the Watkinses were one of the earliest families in that particular region and the only one of Welsh origin till the Lewises of Brecon moved up. If in nostalgia they named this steep ridge, all the more conspicuous because it rises from the flat country of the James, it points to their source; for Malvern Hills, where William Langland had his vision of Piers Ploughman in the fourteenth century, is border country between Wales and England. Enough speculation.

Both sides of the James at this point, some fifteen miles below Richmond, were rich in history long before northern troops stormed through here and Chickahominy swamps to get at the capital of the Confederacy. Malvern Hills, Turkey Island, Curles Neck, Fleur-de-Hundred are the early stamping ground of many families as divergent as the Cockes, the Astons, the Randolphs, the Ishams, the Pleasants, the Byrds, the Woodsons, the Watkinses. Though geographically Tidewater, it was in the seventeenth century the frontier to Jamestown. A hundred years later many of these families had moved on—the

Cockes up the James to Albemarle, the Woodsons and Watkinses down into what was to become Charlotte and Prince Edward. But here they got their start. Henry Watkins of Henrico, along with Colonel Ligon, Richard Cocke, Gilbert Jones, in 1677 surveyed "Mawburne Hills," where Richard Cocke's son William later built a small brick dwelling in the Dutch style sponsored by William of Orange, with extremely thick walls and steep gabled roof. This remarkable house, now a neglected ruin by-passed by tourists intent on Williamsburg, was the pattern expanded in the first two of the three mansions which the extraordinary Cockes built between 1800 and 1825 at Bremo Bluff; the third and grandest was designed by Jefferson and breaks completely with their 17th century architectural tradition. Much later Richard Cocke's and Walter Aston's blood through the Woodsons mingled in Henry of Henrico's descendants, which might have disconcerted those old Anglicans, for their surveyor was to them a heretic outside the pale.

That he was industrious is certain. On the list of Heads of Families recorded in June, 1679, he is entered as possessed of three tithables, one of whom was himself, the other two probably his two eldest sons. By subtracting his subsequent land acquisitions from his final estate, we arrive at 70 acres, probably all that he had inherited or acquired during his first forty years. In 1679 he patented 170 acres in Henrico, adjoining John Lewis, Mr. Cocke and Mr. Beauchamp and touching the "Three Runs." In July 1690 he was able to purchase from Lyonel Morris 360 acres on the southside of Chickahominy Swamp, and 60 more the following October. These 660 acres he divided among his sons in 1692, reserving only 100 for himself. A few other transactions of his are recorded, such as the certificate granted him by Henrico Court in 1691 for having made 21-1/2 pounds of dressed flax and hemp—enough to show him to be an active if small farmer.

Henry Watkins had five sons and one daughter by two wives, the second of whom may have converted him to the Society of Friends, to which he remained in his fashion steadfastly loyal. In 1684 he petitioned for a remission of a fine; but the petition was not granted, "he not appearing himself to supplicate this Court but (as the Court Conceives) continuing still in his Quakerism." His daughter Elizabeth was a pea from the same pod. The very next year, April 1685, sixteen-year-old Elizabeth stood up to the august Henrico Court, refusing "for conscience sake" to swear to a deposition which she had made; she willingly "made affirmation" to her statements, but as a Quaker swear she would not. Promptly she was ordered to prison. Again brought to the bar in June and still "persisting in the same obstinacy as she pretends out of conscience sake and therefore desiring to be excused and her father also humbly seconding her request, the court have out of clemency in consideration of her young years remitted her offence and released her of her confinement." Thus the Court admitted defeat.

We see from the Records of Henrico Meeting for 1699 that Henry's "steadfastness" got him into trouble with his fellow Quakers as well as the civil authorities. He and another member, James Howard, had quarreled. Finally they acknowledged their fault to the special delegation appointed to reconcile them—"only Watkins had made a rash promise not to take Howard by the hand." Shake he would not. Still this public rebuke left him unruffled, for in the same year he subscribed 500 pounds of tobacco towards the building of the Friends' Meeting House at Curles, and in 1703 50 pounds of tobacco towards furnishing the completed building.

Thinking no doubt of these tiffs with the authorities and with his fellow Quakers, Mr. Torrence feels sorry for Henry of Henrico's hard life. But Henry may have enjoyed such clashes; clearly he liked not budging. Probably, too, he enjoyed working hard; certainly he had every reason to be pleased with the result of his labors, and at fifty-three he sensibly divided his responsibilities along with his acres. Like Shakespeare with his lawsuits, if Henry had not got into trouble he would not have got on record. And these few bold strokes of character and personality make him more real than his son or grandson. To a remarkable extent he set his stamp on the breed's contradictions—pride and humility, belligerence and pacifism, obstinacy and gentleness. Above all he propagated independence.

Though he was a professional surveyor, every document on record to which Henry of Henrico signed his name is signed with a mark, a short-coming immediately corrected in the next generation. This may explain why his family began to insist so strenuously on education. Several of them since have been self-educated, but all without exception have believed passionately in the value of learning. Henry of Henrico would have been surprised and gratified to hear Mr. Torrence's tribute:

> The name of Watkins in the South has ever been synonymous with strength of character, mental ability, and it is interwoven in the fabric of her spiritual and material life. The church, the school, the state bear the impress of this family's influence.

He would have been pleased, too, that during the first hundred fifty years of Hampden-Sydney College there was always a Watkins on the Board of Trustees, on the Faculty, or in the student body—frequently all three.

> Henry Watkins Allen, born and raised in Prince Edward, had been a Confederate Brigadier General and Governor of Louisiana; he had married and lost a Mississippi heiress, published an account of his Grand Tour of Europe, swashbuckled, dueled, and languished in salons—all in the Natchez mode. He was the family's only exotic.

We can ignore all of Henry of Henrico's children except one, and skip rapidly down the next two generations, about whom few facts are known. As it happened, Thomas of Swift Creek (to distinguish him from his son Thomas of Chickahominy) was by far the most successful of Henry's five sons; he seems to have shown better business sense as early as 1692, for he was given 200 of the paternal acres, the rest only 120 apiece. He married a Miss Pride, probably daughter of John Pride of Henrico and Goochland, and multiplied his patrimony ten times, becoming a man of comparatively substantial means; his will probated June 23, 1760 disposed of some 2000 acres of land and twenty-four Negroes, besides other personalty. Here the inbreeding begins; two of his daughters married Woodsons and one a Daniel. "From him," Mr. Torrence notes impressively, "are descended the Watkinses of Chesterfield, Prince Edward and Charlotte Counties in Virginia and the Watkinses of Georgia, a branch of the Morton family of Charlotte, the distinguished Daniels of the Virginia Court of Appeals, and the distinguished brothers, Benjamin Watkins Leigh and William Leigh." All of these distinguished people, except those in Prince Edward and Charlotte, we can dismiss right here, after a passing tribute to the youngest son, Benjamin Watkins, Clerk of Chesterfield, who was the first of the name to attain political prominence. He married Elizabeth Cary. With Archibald Cary, he represented Chesterfield in the House of Burgesses 1772-1774, and then in the Conventions of 1775-1776. His zeal in supporting the Revolutionary cause is manifest from his correspondence with Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

We are concerned, however, with Thomas Watkins of Chickahominy (born 1714), the eldest son of Thomas of Swift Creek. He married a sister of Claiborne Anderson, of Chesterfield, and lived near Bottom's Bridge in Henrico, where he died in 1783. Like his brother Benjamin's, Thomas' marriage was advantageous, for Frances Anderson was descended from the Wests and from Secretary William Claiborne, who rose to prominence in seventeenth century Virginia by deliberately provoking trouble with neighboring Maryland and pillaging right and left. Thomas of Chickahominy's lands adjoined those of Joseph Woodson, Colonel Harrison and William Lewis. Despite his Quakerism, he was sent in 1768 by the Vestry of St. John's to Williamsburg with William Randolph, in place of William Lewis and Bowler Cocke. In the same year, according to the Register of St. John's, he was appointed with others to select a new site for a church at Curles. The Vestries of this period frequently enlisted the services of men outside the Established Church, which in Virginia was becoming more concerned with political than religious dominance.

Thomas of Chickahominy got a good start in life, but he had eleven children (four sons and seven daughters) and a strong conviction that they should make their own way in the world. According to Benjamin

Watkins Leigh, after meagre provision for his own he left much of his property outside the family, and though he died intestate before properly executing the codicil, his sons, daughters and sons-in-law, anxious to carry out the old gentleman's wishes, "not only relinquished to the intended beneficiaries their right and title to the property in question, but made liberal contributions to the intended devisees." This firm belief that the sons of each generation should fend for themselves was not only a product of limited means and large families, but a tradition, though seldom so quixotic as in this instance. Thomas of Chickahominy's great-grandson, Henry N., writes to his son Nathaniel in 1848:

> A young man with health and your opportunities, ought, looking to God for help, to determine to support himself by his own Labour. And let me tell you my son, the foundation of every good education is an independent mind; the learning to live within the means which a kind providence has given us. Accustom yourself by times to Industry and Self-denial, not that you should hoard wealth, but that you may live a profitable and useful life.

Though Thomas of Swift Creek as early as 1743 patented 400 acres of land on Bush River in what was to become Prince Edward County, and 1200 in 1747, he and his son Thomas of Chickahominy remained in Henrico. It was in the Watkins home on the Chickahominy that Colonel William Morton, Joseph's son, used to stop for the night on his way to Williamsburg; there he was impressed by the "meek and quiet spirit," the virtues that "shone most conspicuously at home" of Susannah Watkins, whom he married in 1764 and brought to Charlotte County. Susannah's brother Henry had preceded her into southside Virginia; during the fifties he had established himself on his grandfather's land on Bush River in Prince Edward.

Of this Henry, eldest son of Thomas of Chickahominy, little is known for certain. He was an ensign from Prince Edward during the Indian War and in September 1758 received "for pay to himself, two serjeants, and sixteen men, militia of the said county," eighty pounds thirteen shillings. Quakers or no, the Watkinses always went to the wars: this Henry to the French and Indian War; his son Thomas to the Revolution; his grandson Henry N. to the War of 1812; his great-grandsons Richard and Nathaniel to the Civil War. Those like Captain Thomas with the belligerent streak predominant made good soldiers; others, like Nathaniel, pacifist by temperament, joined from a sense of duty, caring nothing for the dashing charge and seeing only the bloodshed, the misery, the terrible waste.

In 1760 Henry Watkins of Prince Edward (known far and wide as "the model husband") married Temperance Hughes, daughter of Robert Hughes, another of whose daughters married George Walton, at that time wealthier and more influential even than the Burgess

Joseph Morton. The Waltons played an important role in southside Virginia before moving to Kentucky. Henry Watkins' daughter Frances later married George's son (her first cousin), General Matthew Walton, and moved west with her husband; after his death she married Governor Pope of Kentucky. And so the Hughes marriage was the second to advance the family, if only indirectly. Perhaps a key to the relative positions of these families in 1760 may be deduced from the original subscription list for the establishment of Briery Church in Prince Edward:

George Walton 50 pounds
Joseph Morton 25 pounds
Henry Watkins 12 pounds

Incidentally, these three were the original Trustees of the Church. But if George Walton's prestige was important to Briery, the moving spirit among the laymen was Joseph Morton.

Joseph Morton was farming in Prince Edward as early as 1736; his eldest son, according to the family Bible, was born at Slate Hill in the following year. Joseph had been converted to Presbyterianism during one of Samuel Davies' visits to Slate Hill in the early fifties, and when Briery (Presbyterian) Church was established in 1760 he, George and Sherwood Walton were the original Ruling Elders. It is typical of the Watkinses that while Henry was a Trustee of Briery from the start and thus active in its affairs, he was never himself a member. His name does not appear on the list, where his wife Temperance is number 14; nor does Henry's son, Captain Thomas, appear, though his wife is number 101. For two generations the Watkins men held out, doubtless with gentle stubbornness, against their womenfolk; it looks as if their Quakerism died hard. The next generation capitulated, however; Captain Thomas' son Henry N. Watkins became a member, a trustee like his grandfather in 1819, a ruling elder in 1828.

In the history of Briery published in 1828, the Rev. James Walter Douglas comments darkly on the founders: "In the appropriation of their funds many will think they erred; but it was the error of the age in which they lived, and their names and motives should be respected by their descendants." This "error of the age in which they lived" (and the explanation of the need for Trustees) was that Briery had from its beginning an endowment of slaves, who were hired out for the church's benefit, a practice fortunately discontinued with the concurrence of the congregation under Douglas' pastorate. Douglas is in fine contrast with those vociferous Presbyterian ministers who twenty years later were justifying slavery as a divine dispensation. And it is pleasant to record this family's devotion to Douglas and his views; if they did not voluntarily free their slaves, as a few early ancestors had done, at least they had the grace to regard slavery as a "necessary evil" and not a blessing. Both slaves and free Negroes appear

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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regularly among the 414 members of Briery down to 1828, and even in the present building a large wing was reserved for them among the congregation. This building, with its unique six gables, dating from about 1850, is one of those happy architectural accidents rare for the period.

Briery has had a distinguished history. Two of its first nine ministers, Samuel Stanhope Smith and Archibald Alexander, were subsequently called to big churches in Philadelphia, and from there went to Princeton, the first to become eventually President of the College, the second President of the Seminary. Others of the nine, John Blair Smith, Drury Lacy, Matthew Lyle, James Hoge, were scarcely less prominent.

The seed of Presbyterianism planted by Samuel Davies had profound social and educational as well as religious consequences in south-side Virginia, and the intimate connection with Philadelphia* and Princeton was a cross-fertilizing agent for seventy-five years. Samuel Stanhope Smith, when he went back to his alma mater to become Professor of Moral Philosophy and President, drew in his wake numbers of young Virginians who had begun their education at Hampden-Sydney—the most famous being William Branch Giles, later Senator from Virginia, brilliant orator, and Governor of his State. Four sons of Nathaniel Venable were graduates of Princeton during this period: Samuel Woodson and Abraham Bedford in 1780; Richard N. in 1782 (he wore for graduation a crimson broadcloth coat, blue knee breeches, and a buff waistcoat trimmed with oblong silver buttons); Nathaniel E. in 1796. Two of Henry Watkins' nephews—William Morton Watkins in 1792, Henry E. Watkins in 1801—went there; and so on. Henry's own son, Captain Thomas, might have preceded them to Princeton, for "his father determined to give him the advantages of the education afforded by the best schools of the period of his youth, and although the Revolutionary war prevented the full execution of his purpose in this respect, he received more cultivation than was usually bestowed on the sons of planters."

But Thomas, definitely one of the belligerents of the family, at the age of sixteen marched away from Hampden-Sydney in 1777 with the College Company to Williamsburg and Petersburg. Later he raised in Prince Edward a troop of volunteer cavalry (dragoons), who elected him captain. This was the troop which Lee scorned and later gave the chance to scorn him in turn when they refused him for Nathaniel Greene. After the action at Guilford Washington wrote Captain Watkins a letter highly commending the conduct of the Prince Edward

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*To be strictly accurate, the connection with Philadelphia Presbytery did not begin till 1758, the year before Samuel Davies was called back to become President of Princeton. In 1758 the breach between Old Side (Philadelphia) and New Lights (Princeton) was healed.

troop and the gallantry of their commanding officer. When the fighting was over, instead of resuming his interrupted education like the young Venables, he chose to become their brother-in-law by marrying Betsy Ann, Nathaniel's eldest daughter. After fathering two sons and four daughters and becoming a Colonel of Militia, Thomas Watkins died in 1797 when only thirty-six. His Aunt Frances Watkins had married Governor Pope of Kentucky; now two of his grandsons were to become governors of states—Thomas Watkins Ligon of Maryland, Henry Watkins Allen of Louisiana.

The Venables were another advantageous connection for the family in its long rise from obscurity. In 1755 Nathaniel Venable, turned twenty-two and just married to Elizabeth Woodson, moved down from Hanover to Slate Hill, which his father-in-law bought from Joseph Morton and presented to him, and to which his own father added nine hundred acres. Here until his death in 1804 he lived a busy life as farmer, merchant, public officer, active supporter of education, clerk for some years of the vestry of St. Patrick's Parish. A member of the House of Burgesses from 1766 to 1769, he was also elected a member of the Virginia Council in 1768 and of the Committee of Safety. On entering the Revolutionary Army in 1777 he was appointed First Lieutenant; but his most valuable service was supply of American troops—salt, food, all kinds of equipment, and he almost ruined himself by accepting Continental money at face value, just as his grandson James B. Daniel accepted Confederate. When Cornwallis moved through Carolina and Tarleton swirled on raids through southside Virginia, Slate Hill became a focal point.

Baron Steuben was entertained here with his men on their way to join General Greene. Once, in her husband's absence, Elizabeth Venable foiled Tarleton's raiders (long before Poe wrote about the Purloined Letter) by packing the chief supplies in tobacco hogsheads and leaving them conspicuously on view; though everything else was stripped or burned, the hogsheads were ignored. In the meantime her son Samuel Woodson Venable was marching to Guilford with his future brother-in-laws, Thomas Watkins and James Daniel, and Thomas' uncle, William Morton. William Bullock was there, too, and Robert Hughes, Joel Watkins, Thomas Read, Joseph Morton, James Morton, and so many other relations that to Prince Edward, Charlotte and Granville the Battle of Guilford Courthouse seemed a family affair.

Despite a Huguenot wife and a Quaker mother, Nathaniel Venable remained Anglican until his Revolutionary fervor turned him against all things British and dropped him into the Presbyterian lap.* He

*"Patrick Henry himself had been attending the services of Samuel Davies and William Waddell, both Presbyterians. Most important of all, the inflammatory oratory of Patrick Henry identified the established church with the British government and both had been accused

made up for lost time by leading the members of Briery and Cub Creek* in agitating for a Presbyterian Academy or College in the neighborhood. Southside Virginians, regardless of faith, had long felt the need for a college more accessible than William and Mary, and the dynamic example of Princeton in its brilliant golden age under the redoubtable Witherspoon, the only clergyman and college president to sign the Declaration of Independence, fired them. A Princeton graduate, the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith, was right there at Briery to spark this tinder.

This irresistible march of Presbyterianism must have alarmed the few remaining Anglicans like Peter Johnston, who also stayed a Tory up to the very eve of the Revolution, hoping against hope that some compromise could be reached with England. But the Presbyterians even at their most rigid do not stress sectarianism, and these were shrewd enough to enlist the cooperation of their Anglican friends and relatives rather than antagonize them. When the members of Hanover Presbytery met in February 1775 in Nathaniel Venable's office in the yard at Slate Hill (this "Cradle" has now been moved to the college campus), it was the unshakable Anglican Peter Johnston who offered 100 acres as the site of the new college, where, the minutes carefully specify, "the Presbyterian mode of worship" would be observed at chapel and church services, yet the students "should enjoy their own religious sentiments" and "be at liberty to attend such religious services as they preferred." The Records of Hanover Presbytery show

(Footnote continued)

of tyranny. . . ."—The Virginia Vestry: a Study in the Decline of a Ruling Class, by James Kimbrough Owen, Unpublished Thesis in the Princeton University Library, p. 165.

"Mrs. Carter, one of the aristocrats of the colony, could tell Philip Fithian at the eve of the Revolution that she could see little difference between the Presbyterians and the established church. . . . The rise of Patrick Henry as politician, the establishment of the Presbyterian College of Hampden Sydney, and a rising number of vestrymen elected but refusing to serve, all evidenced a growing isolation of the vestrymen." Ibid., p. 167.

*I have neglected Cub Creek Church, which is older than Briery, simply because none of these families had any connection with it till later. In 1738 John Caldwell had brought a small group of Scots-Irish to Cub Creek in Charlotte, at a time when Joseph Morton was still in Prince Edward. After moving to Charlotte many of the Mortons transferred to Cub Creek.

These Scots-Irish eventually spread, as where do these admirable people not spread? throughout the region; so that gradually McCormicks, Reids, Calhouns began to mingle with the original English-Welsh-French combination.

how carefully and repeatedly this point was stressed—"that no undue influence be used . . . to byas the judgment of any; but that all of every denomination shall enjoy his own religious sentiments, and be at liberty to attend that mode of publick worship, that either custom or conscience makes most agreeable to them, when and where they may have opportunity of enjoying it." Furthermore, to the original board of Trustees four members of Presbytery were elected, four Episcopal and four Presbyterian laymen.

Despite these precautions there was some hostility. When President Smith advertised in The Virginia Gazette in 1775 that an Academy would be opened in Prince Edward, a bitter attack appeared in that paper, warning parents against the new school, since it was "inconsistent with prudence or good policy to suffer a dissenter to teach in any of our public schools, much less to act as President, both which are intended to take place in the Prince Edward Academy." This new school would be in the hands of men teaching "doctrines which are not only repugnant to the doctrines of the Church of England, but even subversive of morality."

To this President Smith vigorously rejoined that the writer was supposing "that the Presbytery of Hanover are to be 'visitors' of the Academy." "It is true," he wrote, "that Presbyterian clergy first concerted the measure, as friends to the interests of learning and virtue, which had lain neglected long enough . . . but, far from being governed by contracted notions, that they might extend the utility of the institution, they have now yielded the power of visitation and of managing the general concern of the Academy into the hands of trustees, who are chiefly members of the Church of England. Let him produce an instance of equal candor from any other church." He seems in his righteous indignation to have been unaware that "chiefly" was not entirely candid on his part; the Church of England members were one third of the Board.

Thus Hampden-Sydney, founded in the memorable year 1776, embraced in its very name a double ideal, the union of civil and religious liberty. John Hampden had given his life in opposing the ship money tax under Charles the First; Algernon Sydney had been imprisoned for defending religious liberty in the reign of Charles the Second. And Samuel Stanhope Smith had anticipated the declaration of religious liberty which George Mason later wrote into the new Virginia State Constitution.

That Presbyterians, long irked by religious and civil restraints (never serious in Virginia, where a modus vivendi with dissenters had long been arrived at), should champion religious freedom is understandable since they had everything to gain; yet it is one of the finest elements of their tradition. Richard Watkins writes home from Washington College (later Washington and Lee) in the 1840's that the faculty firmly refused to accept the resignation of Professor Dabney

simply because he had turned Baptist. And after the Civil War Robert E. Lee, though himself Episcopalian, chose to head Presbyterian Washington College rather than an institution of his own denomination for the very reason that Washington College did not stress sectarianism.

As for civil liberty, on the original Board of Trustees of Hampden Sydney, along with local notables, shine the names of James Madison and Patrick Henry, who wrote into the charter of 1783 a clause making it the duty of the trustees to select members of the Faculty in thorough agreement with the principles on which the Government of the United States rests.

Samuel Stanhope Smith was in tune with all these men. He had ambition and audacity. At the new college "shall be taught the Greek and Latin languages to their greatest extent; and all the sciences which are usually studied at any College, or Academy, on the Continent." Geography was to be taught "in greater perfection than it is done in the major Institutions of learning;" and "Mathematics, History, Eloquence, Criticism and the science of Morals. . . . The system of education will resemble that which is adopted in the College of New Jersey, save that a more particular attention shall be paid to the cultivation of the English language." It was not only to rival but to improve on Princeton, and like Princeton to have its own Academy as training ground and feeder for the College.

But that so many of the founders themselves in the seventeen eighties and nineties sent their sons on to the College of New Jersey after preliminary years at Hampden-Sydney shows that these ambitious were not immediately realized. For some time Hampden-Sydney remained a struggling institution, its own golden age coming at the end of the nineteenth century instead of the eighteenth. After three years President Smith was enticed back to Princeton. The turmoil of the Revolution and its aftermath caused many difficulties, and the "College" survived its first lean years by the skin of its teeth and a series of private benefactions by Colonel Nash and others. At one time all the meals were prepared at Slate Hill kitchen and sent over the hill to the handful of boys too young to fight.

This brings us to the beginning of the nineteenth century and to Captain Thomas' son Henry N. Watkins, the first of these letter writers. He was twelve years old when Washington died in 1799, and his literary style shows that President Smith's desire that more particular attention be paid to the cultivation of the English language had not been quite realized when Henry N. was graduated from Hampden-Sydney with first honors in the class of 1807. But with his law practice, his farm, a large family and twenty wards, Henry N. was too much harassed to follow his own advice to his son in 1844:

> Let me advise you when you write not to write extemporaneously. Mature the subject on which you would write in your mind

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

before you commence writing, and then the task of writing will be easy and effective.

Chapter III. Washington College and Washington, D.C., and Hard Times: 1840-1850

Richard Watkins, Henry N's second son, writes home from Washington College at Lexington, Virginia, in 1843:

> There are now about seventy students in college. Six new ones have come since I last wrote home and we expect four more on Monday. I am in hopes that before the end of the session we will attain to the regular number. But times are hard, as many as were once here can hardly be expected.
>
> The last two who arrived are the most foppish fellows I ever saw. And I do not know whether or not they will remain. They are from the South. I understand that one of them pulled out about five hundred dollars in gold to pay a tavern bill of one dollar. They certainly have something calculated to make them walk large in these days and are a little excusable.

For the cotton growers of the Deep South the thirties and forties were a period of mounting prosperity; but times were hard in Virginia and North Carolina. Even in the Piedmont the land was suffering a kind of leukemia from a century of erosion and tobacco growing. Some landowners accepted this as an act of God and sought new pastures, but others, like William S. Morton, a graduate of Hampden-Sydney and of the University of Pennsylvania, made at least a few gestures toward scientific reclamation in the late forties. Slave labor was no longer profitable and only a small number could be an enormous responsibility. Doctor's bills alone were a steady drain, as we find again and again in these letters, especially in epidemics like the measles at Oldham in 1858. In the immediate bitterness of the Surrender, Richard in a letter to Nathaniel signs himself ironically "freedman." But after not so many years both were to realize that the Civil War had freed whites as well as Negroes from the intolerable burden of slavery.

Many southerners attribute their economic bankruptcy at the end of the nineteenth century entirely to dispossession, Reconstruction, Military Occupation; but nothing is clearer than the Civil War merely precipitated an inevitable economic catastrophe. Already in the forties many of these southerners were living on capital.

It is hard to estimate the exact financial situation of this particular family. Their wills were simple, casual, seldom itemized. Children were largely provided for as they grew up and married; Henry N. Watkins, for instance, mentions in his brief will drawn in 1848 that

two thousand dollars advanced to his daughter Betsy Ann Ballantine and a similar amount to his eldest son William be deducted from their share in the final settlement. Oldham in Prince Edward, which he had inherited from his father, Captain Thomas, was a plain story-and-a-half house on some fifteen hundred acres of land. Exactly how many slaves he owned is impossible to tell—not over thirty, for when eight years after his father's death Nathaniel writes of the epidemic at Oldham, he remarks that the eighteen cases are "almost all of our hands;" and two Negroes had been given to Betsy Ann, five to Richard, some to William. It is usually in these letters euphemistically "hands" or "servants," never "slaves" and rarely "Negroes."

One answer was already becoming apparent. Not only the young, impecunious, adventurous were searching for new lands; whole families were beginning to march, especially in the thirties. Henry N. Watkins' brother-in-law departed with his family and all his movables for Missouri. From Granville groups of Nancy Daniel Watkins' relatives—Boyds, Taylors, Reads--auctioned off what they could not carry with them and migrated to Tennessee. Her grandfather, Charles Lewis Read, sold Brookland, which by a sad but unconscious irony she persuaded her husband, Nathaniel Watkins, to buy back twenty-five years later. The land was exhausted when Charles Read left it. Being a natural born farmer and for his day a remarkably scientific one, Nathaniel restored it as well as he could during the poverty of Reconstruction by rotating and diversifying crops, experimenting with grasses, becoming a passionate addict of fertilizer. Brookland is an interesting early case history of thoughtless exploitation and painful restoration, as we shall see.

Nathaniel's father, Henry N., frequently mentions being hard-pressed for money. While farmers of his type had all they needed of the necessities of life, cash was scarce even when supplemented by lawyer's fees. Yet he never denied any plea of Richard's or Nathaniel's for money, and members of his family were always going to various nearby watering places, and occasionally farther afield. The isolation from large towns meant the expense of governesses and tutors for the children, invariably brought down from the North, almost invariably from New England. A sensible arrangement, however, usually shared the cost. Miss Sarah Skinner of Massachusetts, of whom more later, lived for years at Waterloo, James B. Daniel's home in Granville; but she also taught the children of his sister, Mrs. Judith Graham, who paid half her salary. The influence of these northern teachers was more than educational; they established ties which survived the Civil War, and many of them married into southern families. Sarah Skinner's aunt, Emily Howe, who came down in 1836 to teach in the home of Mr. Dance, a Methodist minister in Prince Edward, in 1838 married a neighbor, Colonel Asa Dupuy of Linden, becoming in time the mother-in-law of Richard Watkins and a family favorite.

The most famous of these little family academies, that run by Henry N. Watkins in the office at Oldham, was over before these letters begin. It belonged to the early period of his marriage and included his stepson, Edwin Edmunds, his eldest son William, but it deserves singling out because of his two nephews, Thomas Watkins Ligon and Henry Watkins Allen. Early left motherless, they were given into their uncle's charge.

The tutor was a young graduate of Harvard, who, in those days of limited accommodations and large households, slept with the boys in the large room over the office, a separate building in the yard. He was scarcely more than a boy himself and so frequently shared in their escapades that Henry N. was finally on the point of discharging him. But the sobered nephews pleaded that the fault was theirs; granted a period of grace, the three young men immediately determined to make something of their lives. The two pupils became governors of Maryland and Louisiana, and, according to the family story, the young tutor returned to Harvard to become a famous professor. The nearest to a factual record of this school is to be found in Sarah Dorsey's Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen (1866).

Dr. Thomas Allen was among the migrants; in 1833 (when young Henry Allen was thirteen) he took his motherless family the long overland route to Missouri. The other orphaned nephew, Thomas Watkins Ligon, continued his education in Virginia, obtaining a degree from Hampden-Sydney in 1830. From there he went to the University of Virginia and then to Yale Law School. After his admission to the Virginia Bar, however, he decided to practice in Baltimore, where he soon entered politics. As one of Maryland's Representatives in Washington he was later to introduce the Watkinses and Ballantines to the White House circle.

Henry Watkins Allen's colorful career is available in the even more colorful prose (spiced with quotations from Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian) of that amazing Mississippi blue-stocking, Sarah Dorsey. Henry's sister Mary married the Hon. P. L. Edwards, of Missouri; in the fifties they moved to California. Another sister, Elizabeth, married Judge Ephraim B. Ewing of the Missouri Supreme Court. These were not the Missouri cousins with whom the Virginians kept closely in tough. And though in 1860 Henry Watkins Allen returned, in a characteristically pathetic Dorsey scene (she makes much of his worship of his mother, of his "Cymric" heritage), to visit his mother's grave in Prince Edward, Nathaniel and Richard never really knew him, since the former was only two at the time of Uncle Allen's removal, Richard six. Henry Watkins Allen became a Confederate Brigadier General, and Governor of Louisiana (1863-65).

Richard was sixteen when he wrote to twelve year old Nathaniel from Washington College:

1843--I will ease my mind of a burden which has pressed me

> sore for a day or two. Sister stated in her last letter that Pa was very much mortified at my circular. This certainly must arise from some mistake, for I went up in Professor Calhoun's Room and asked him what my circular was and after turning to the register he told me that it was six and a half plus (6 1/2 +), i.e., that it was more than six and a half for scholarship and 6 3/4 for behavior. 7 is perfect. My mean was surpassed by only one person in College and he carried on only one study whereas I carried on four.
>
> What! Pa mortified at that circular!!! But perhaps friend Philo has made some mistake. There are now in College three or four other geniuses beside myself possessing the name of Watkins. They average about 4 and 5, and perhaps friend Philo has sent a wrong circular to my parents, if so he had better look sharp or I will catch him. Look sharp then my friend and do thou Oh Pacific Ocean, thou inkstand of Creation, and you, ye tall pine crow-quills for such an occasion lend your aid in expungeing this fatal circular. . . .

In that oratory-hypnotized age and region, Richard seldom resists for long some serio-comic flight of this kind. After urging his young brother who was going to school to Brother Ballantine at Worsham, to "sing by note and even outstrip the dweller of the Level," he lapses for a moment into the characteristic Watkins Puritan vein:

> But here while giving advice let me take occasion to remark that you are exposed to great temptations while at the Courthouse to be lazy. The inhabitants of that place do not train their boys to great industry. You must not yield to the temptation and become lazy because you see others so or because I set you a bad example, but try and be Pa's choice boy. Be industrious at your book as you were at your hoe and hatchet and you will do honor to the family.
>
> Tell Sister Ballantine that I was very glad to hear her will as regards my pantaloons, and feel very thankful for the will and still more for the pair which she gave me before I came over. I have been wearing them almost every day and Sunday too since the winter set in. My blue cassimere have become so thin and old that I am in misery every time I put them on and go to church or to see the ladies, for fear that they will betray me and I would be obliged to cry out in the language of the poet, "My Gallegaskins have long withstood the winters fury and encroaching frost—by time subdued, what will not time subdue, a horrid chasm disclose." . . .

No wonder Richard is so much impressed by the "foppish" young men "from the South" who pull out five hundred dollars to pay a dollar tavern bill. Evidently he and most of his college mates lived meagre Spartan lives, at times almost Dickensian.

The opening paragraphs of this letter reveal Richard's ambition to

excel in his studies and Henry N.'s mortification by a poor circular (report). Both father and son were ambitious of intellectual distinction; and yet we have seen from an earlier quotation referring to Richard's expectation of getting the first or second honor that the father (himself first honor man at Hampden-Sydney) was equally determined to check-rein over-anxiety on his son's part. Richard more than Nathaniel had the family sensitivity to praise or blame; while his father welcomed a good circular as much as the son, he concealed it. In answer to another letter of Richard's written a few months later, he writes:

> 1844—Your Mama wrote to you that we thought you had better not take the trip to Washington with the Cadets. I agree with her that you had better remain at College until the close of the session, both because it would be less expensive and because I think you would be better employed at College than marching through the country, leaving out of consideration the exposure of your health.
>
> You speak of desiring to distinguish yourself. I hope the only distinction you will seek is to become well acquainted with your profession and be very useful in it. True merit would rather avoid than court distinction. Never seek distinction to feed vanity and pride. The only reason we should seek distinction is to be more useful.
>
> With regard to what profession you shall select, I shall not interfere with your choice.
>
> Please inform me what sum of money shall be sufficient for the remainder of the session.
>
> All well, your father,
> Henry N. Watkins.

Richard was graduated in 1846 and of his own accord chose his father's profession of the law. He might have gone on to the University of Virginia, as Nathaniel did later, or to William and Mary; but in those days "apprenticeship" under an established lawyer was considered sufficient, and so in the fall of 1846 Richard was established in Richmond under Mr. Grattan. His feelings about Richmond show clearly the homesickness of the country boy in town:

> Well, Nat:
>
> Fine place for study this—outdoors—rain, rain, rain; patter, patter, patter, tramp, tramp, tramp; roll, roll, roll, ting, tong, tong--carts, bells and niggers all making a noise, and even now there is a fellow under my window bawling "charcoal" as if he would split his throat, wish somebody would cram a chunk of it into his mouth.
>
> But this is not all. Five or six young ladies have been persecuting a cracked piano & a broken guitar downstairs ever since I have been here, and we hear old tunes and bad tunes and poorly-played tunes "sine numero".

> Mr. Grattan is just the man—he is a good lawyer, perfect gentleman, and labours arduously, so that his instructions are very good, my intercourse with him extremely pleasant, and his example well worthy of imitation. I am reading Archbold's Nisi Prius, and Tucker's Blackstone (Blackstone still!) and notwithstanding the novelty of the place and the many inconveniences & the heavy expense, can say with a clear conscience that I have made good use of my time and would by no means take the amount of my board for the knowledge which I have gained. Have read 12 or 13 hours everyday. . . .

If Richard had circulars which he could proudly send home, the same seems not to have been true of Nathaniel when he went to Washington College in his turn, or perhaps he was simply careless as always about writing. At any rate, Henry N. is disturbed over receiving no circular for months:

> 1847—You must know, however, that to make a scholar, you must not only get your lessons well, but you must learn to think, and then to communicate your thoughts in the most intelligent and interesting manner. When you take hold of any subject, never rest satisfied untill you can so communicate your knowledge to others as to make them understand your views. . . . If you can teach others what you have learned, then you may claim that you understand the subject. Merely to get your lessons so as to avoid the censure of your teacher, is to be satisfied with a very superficial knowledge, and will never qualify you for a Learned Profession. . . . If you would do this you will have to be a student.
>
> For this purpose let your companions be boys who are anxious to learn; avoid the company of profane and idle boys. I would recommend also that you use the strictest economy in your expenses, since your education is all that you will have to depend on for a living. Know also that economy and self denial are indispensable parts of a good education.

He insists on economy more frequently in his letters to Nathanial, who had got in with a high-spirited crowd known as the "Tuckahoe Boys," and joined (to his mother's anxious disapproval) a secret society. Other temptations were constantly in the mind of this exemplary father. He warns Nathaniel not to get involved in the dispute going on in Lexington (1847) between Church and Pastor, and not, as we have already seen, to be "infected with the (erroneous) Politicks of Dr. Ruffner" on the slave question. Moderation in all things:

> 1848—How many young men are ruined at College; averse to study, they contract habits of idleness and extravagance, and often sink into more degrading vices, and thus become nuisances to society instead of its ornaments. We flatter ourselves that our child

will be a comfort to his Parents and a useful member of society; we have full confidence we shall not be disappointed in you.

Richard & Susan & Susan Venable have gone to Washington.

All of this exhortation had some effect on mercurial Nathaniel, for he wrote of his high resolutions and of his decision to teach as a profession. Henry N. always left these choices to his sons:

1848--We were glad to find that you intend to make a scholar of yourself if possible; we hope you will not give up that determination, always keeping in mind, that under Providence you must depend upon your own exertions to accomplish any good or great object. And you may be assured that I shall not designedly get in your way, but will do all I can to aid you in every laudable & proper effort.

Despite his good resolution and borrowing from his brother Richard, Nathaniel had still not learned prudence. In April 1849, his senior year, he tries the old indirect approach-familiar to all college boys, and his father catches him out:

I heard by your brother that a letter of yours came to the Court House yesterday, asking for more money. I have not seen your letter, but as I am in Farmville do now send you a check for fifty dollars. Please make a good use of it. This sum will make two hundred & seventy dollars which you have had this session; thirty dollars more towards the close of the session will make the three hundred, which was the sum your brother Richard spent the last session he was in Washington College.

The Family generally well, and feel a great anxiety about you. We all hope that you will improve the great privileges which you now enjoy, that you may lay a good foundation for an Education.

Your affectionate Father.

Some may wonder why Richard and Nathaniel happened to be at Washington College, when Hampden-Sydney was right at their doorstep, and was furthermore virtually a family institution, of which Henry N. Watkins was a graduate and Trustee. During one of the several mid-century splits among the Presbyterians, the Watkinses, Ballantines, and several Morton and Venable families sided with the "new school" against the "old;" they withdrew from Briery and established a church of their own named after their beloved Briery pastor, Douglas, with Mr. Ballantine as minister (he was paid the princely salary of six hundred dollars a year). During the last years of the Civil War this breach was healed and everyone reunited at Briery. But for twenty years, during which Richard and Nathaniel grew up, there was strain, involving Hampden-Sydney as well, for it was a center of the "old school," whereas Washington College was all for the new liberalism. The sons of both Richard and Nathaniel and

four of their five grandsons went to Hampden-Sydney.

The influence on this family of the oldest daughter's husband, the Rev. Elisha Ballantine, was second only to their father's and mother's; and he felt that at this period Washington College was outstripping Hampden-Sydney. Elisha Ballantine, so much older than Richard and Nathaniel that he really belonged to a previous generation, deserved their respect and affection. He was born at Schodack on the Hudson in 1809. Before coming down to Hampden-Sydney Seminary he had been graduated at Athens, Ohio; and he afterwards spent a year and a half at Halle, Germany, studying theology to prepare himself for a professorship at Hampden-Sydney Seminary, which then overshadowed the college.

As for the way Elisha felt about his in-laws, we have the word of his daughter Mary, written to her Uncle Nathaniel from Wisconsin thirty years (1886) after the Ballantines had moved West:

> My dear Father loved Mother's relations too--I was never with him that he didn't say something of "Your Ma's home and Father & Mother"—he always said there was something in that home that attracted him at once, and he always loved and honored her parents, and loved her brothers and sisters.
>
> The year Anna went to Europe he spent three months with us and taught Paul Latin. One day as they were out on the porch and Paul was reciting I heard Pa say, "Now, Nat,--" and then went on explaining. I asked, "Pa, did you call Paul Nat?" "Oh yes, he said—I did"—forty years ago it used to be Nat, and the old chord vibrated and the name so long uncalled, came up so naturally.
>
> My children are growing up fast around me, and Henry Watkins, my baby is like Grandpa and cousin Henry Venable. He is droll & full of life. . . .

A man for his time so highly trained as Mr. Ballantine was clearly wasted on a tiny church like Douglas. He remained there for ill health as well as sentimental reasons, but in 1848 felt recovered sufficiently to accept a call. His wife, Betsy Ann, writes the news in January to her brother Nathaniel:

> Mr. Ballantine is to be installed Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Washington on the first Sat. in March. . . . He says, "last Sabbath Mr. and Mrs. Polk were in their places at church. Mrs. Fremont, Prof. Morse, of the Telegraph was there and others." He has visited the President and become personally acquainted with him and his lady. But all of this is nothing if he is not able to sustain himself as minister.
>
> It is a very large church. Has about 200 members, is not far from the capitol. I was in it before I was married. . . .

Washington at this time was an even more curious paradox than it

is today--half swamp and slum, half unfinished governmental grandeur. The dome was not on the Capitol, the Monument at half-mast. But the President and noted figures of the day moved freely among the crowds. This family settled easily into the social life of Washington, to which they were not strangers. Henry N's first cousin, Abram Watkins Venable, and his nephew, Thomas Watkins Ligon, were members of Congress from North Carolina and Maryland. It was Ligon, brought up at Oldham, who gave them speedy entree to the White House. By way of the Maryland House of Delegates he had reached Congress in 1845 and there won Polk's lasting gratitude and personal friendship for his defense of the Mexican War.* Returned to Congress in 1847, Ligon lost his seat in 1850; whereupon he ran successfully for Governor of Maryland.

Betsy Ann portrays Washington in a matter-of-fact way which reveals the heightening in some of her more mercurial brother Richard's parallel accounts. A month after she broke the news to Nathaniel, the Ballantines were established in their home and Betsy Ann writes of John Quincy Adams' funeral, which she did not attend because of the press of people, but which deeply impressed her husband. She was among the throng who paid him tribute as he lay in state, but her comments are disappointingly trivial:

> I went to the Capitol the day before and saw the corpse. Hundreds of persons were going to see it. It was in a leaden coffin and then in a mahogany one covered with black velvet, with silver fringe around the lid. A glass was over the face so that you could see it without opening the coffin.

She is pleased with the friendliness of the people and mode of life in Washington.

> We live very differently from what we did in Va. Very much as we did in Ohio. Our kitchen joins the dining room [southern kitchens were separate buildings in the yard with huge fireplaces instead of stoves] and we have a cooking stove and can get anything from the market that we want. We can have the finest fish I ever saw and they are very cheap. . . . I brought Sam and Eliza [Negroes] with me and we have no other servants.

---

*Thomas Watkins Ligon had been partly instrumental in establishing the "Baltimore Post" in 1833, contributing heavily to its editorial columns in support of the Democrats, attaining considerable reputation as writer and speaker. His speech on the Mexican War is typical of mid-nineteenth century eloquence. For text of speech see Biographical Sketch of Hon. Thomas Watkins Ligon, Maryland Historical Society.

To Betsy Ann her husband's church is "very large but plain." "The lecture room is as large as the church at Prince Edward," and this room resounded to some famous oratory. A few months later, Richard on a visit writes flamboyantly: "B. has a fine church—one of the largest in the City—splendid mahogany pulpit with marble slab on top—beautiful marble table in front—and a large congregation of as proud people as you ever saw. I strutted in last Sab: & sat in Buchanan's pew (Sec. of Navy or something else, don't care what.)" That slight provincial bumptiousness again, though all this "strutting" is really for his brother's private amusement.

> Here am I in the Great Metropolis:—loafing—spending money—riding about in hacks—strutting up Pennsylvania Avenue—visiting the big bugs—eating oysters—examining patents—chewing tobacco—attending Synod—going aboard of vessels—through the Capitol, the Armory, the Cemetery, seeing and being seen. [Here follows a catalogue of the Smithsonian, one of the real wonders of the place.] In short I have seen here the world in a nut-shell and several nut shells in the world. . . .
>
> Potato pudding for dinner and I have eaten so much of it that you may expect this epistle to be drawn to a close immediately—can't bend myself over a table. Mary is now playing on the piano—I have heard poorer performers in the party room.
>
> But she takes no lessons & I fear will forget everything she knows.
>
> Lizzy is more yankeefied than any—
>
> Hello: ladies are coming and I must leave this room. Never saw so much visiting in the same length of time in my life. . . . Expect to go to the White House today: Wish I had you along to see James K. & Lady. . . .

On another visit in 1850, feeling less self-conscious, Richard delights in less superficial Washington activities, including a second memorable funeral:

> Reached Washington last Friday week two days before Calhoun's death and staid until Wednesday—Heard all the eulogies passed on him by Clay, Webster, Butler of S.C., Rusk of Texas, Clemens of Alabama, Winthrop of Mass., Holmes of South Carolina, and Abram Venable of North Carolina. It was a very interesting time—Also attended the funeral, saw old Zac and his Cabinet.
>
> Did not know what was meant by eloquence before I heard Clay & Webster. Winthrop too is very little inferior to either of them as a speaker. I also attended the Smithsonian and heard Professor Read of Pennsylvania. Said to be one of the most learned men in that State. Moreover, I attended the laying of a corner stone of an Episcopal Church and there heard Senator Berrien of Georgia. [Plummer of Baltimore] is lecturing in Mr. Ballantine's Church.

I had always regarded him as the best speaker of my acquaintance. But he is a mere schoolboy in comparison with Webster & Clay— Wherever I went I witnessed a great display of beauty. The occasion brought out the fair sex en masse.

When I reached Richmond on my way home found Geo: Hannah & Colonel Gaines & Claiborne Barksdale there, come down to buy five carriages for persons in Charlotte. . . .

Sister's children as smart as pretty and as bad as ever. Henry has been taking drawing lessons at school and seems to have what to me appears a very remarkable talent for it. . . . Give my love to all, and remember me most affectionately to Miss Emmet when you see her. Bless her dear heart and pocket.

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Miss Emmet was a notoriously ugly local heiress whom Richard was constantly threatening to marry, or urging Nathaniel to marry, to mend the family fortune.

He found starting a law practice in Prince Edward discouragingly slow. There were too many doctors and lawyers already. He and his partner "are both out of love now & out of money and out of liquor and in law—both intending to be distinguished barristers some day--to get rich whenever we can get enough to do--and get married whenever a fit opportunity presents itself. Don Pedro Taylor intends running for the County—and so depraved is the Democratic taste becoming nowadays, I should not be surprised if he were elected. He has the whole bar to back him--the liquor bar I mean--from which Frazier Scott on the day of election is to retail potent and convincing arguments."

Nathaniel, graduated from college in 1849, was now trying his hand at teaching school. He was still careless about letter writing, still the subject of as much affectionate concern as when at college. He was even more restless and dissatisfied than Richard. The letters of both reveal the harsh as well as admirable side of country life in that region. The roads in winter were virtually impassable except on horseback. A faulty economic system left too much time for idleness, for loafing and carousing on every hand; even the discipline of a stern Puritan code might not counteract these evil influences. Susan writes in February 1850 with her familiar italics:

My dear Brother Nat

Again I take up my pen to carry on the *correspondence*, I was going to say, between us; however call it what you will, I feel that I must write to you sometimes. I received a letter yesterday from Sue Morton and was very glad to hear that you are *still* in the land of the living, and still think of and love your Sister when provoked thereto by the interrogatories of a mutual friend and Cousin, but enough of this.

By the way I must tell you of a very serious charge some of the neighbors have brought against you, as well as several others of

> your Sex. It is the current report in the neighborhood that every Gentleman at Mr. Womacks Xmas was drunk. Who knows but that was your reason for hurrying off so soon the next morning, and I have just thought, that accounts for your cloak having been left at Mrs. Dupuys. . . .

The Womacks were evidently great party-givers, as Susan herself had reason to know. Earlier Patty Watkins, with artlessly assumed sophistication, had written to brother Nathaniel:

> Sister Sue went to a large dancing party at Mr. Womacks. They danced merrily to 2 a.m. . . . Sister Sue and Myself went to a dining. Everything is very dull over this way. . . .

In 1848 Mary Ballantine had scribbled to her Uncle Nathaniel from Washington the grave assurance: "I don't believe that I have seen any of your acquaintances since I have been here, at least anybody that have enquired after you." But Mary was coming along rapidly. Now thirteen, she is amused by his new job:

> 1850—. . . and then I thought of my old uncle who is teaching school. How do you like it? Pa got a letter from you in which you seemed rather discouraged, but I reckon it was just homesickness. Wasn't it? I can just imagine Uncle Nat walking across the floor of his schoolroom, first showing one of his classical scholars how to read a phrase in Caesar and then showing another one how to do a sum in Bourdon.

Within a year she grows critical, but is still artless and herself homesick for Prince Edward:

> Dreadful dry times up this way, how is it down there? . . . I forgot to tell you about the Colonization meeting; it was held in our church which was very much crowded. Henry Clay made an address of three quarters of an hour, a right good one, after which Rev. Dr. Fuller of Baltimore made a long uninteresting speech. The meeting lasted until 1 o'clock. Fillmore was present and Clay paid him some compliments.
>
> People have a great party spirit in Washington about this time. Ma & Pa have gone to one tonight, given to the New York millionaire Anson Phelps. They were at one last week too. The old folks are turning out. . . .
>
> I have been invited to four partys this winter but have attended only one. Hal has been to three. I know of four in our neighborhood tonight, but I am invited to none of them. . . .

When asked when she had heard from Nathaniel, his Mother wrote that she was ashamed to answer:

> The person said you kept up a regular correspondence with

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> Peggy Dupuy, now I really think I or Susan are deserving a letter as much as Peggy . . . . I want you to come down sometimes to see your Pa. I do not want you to lose time from your school. I expect you have lost a great deal [her dry acknowledgment of his fondness for the gay life].

In the same joint letter Susan explains why their Mother wants Nathaniel home:

> I will now tell you about Pa--he is I think declining in health, though he does not complain of much suffering—he looks serious and is becoming more absent and forgetful—rides out every good day, and has been this week to Farmville and had a section put in his side. None of us knew he was going to have it done till he came home. He seems to be more affectionate and gentle to all around him than I ever knew him.
>
> It makes me feel very sad sometimes to sit and look at him—and then I wish that all of his children could be with him to see what an example he is of what a Christian should be—but has it not been the same thing with him ever since you or I could recollect? What a great blessing to have such Parents as we have all our lives been blessed with.

A few months later (1850) Henry N. Watkins died, after sixty-three patient, kindly, useful years. In 1851 Elisha Ballantine, again threatened with paralysis, had to give up his Washington Church and return to Prince Edward Courthouse. On his departure his congregation gave him a substantial present, and in grateful memory he named the new house which he built at the Courthouse "Washington Home." Oldham (Old Home) where Captain Thomas Watkins had died at the end of the eighteenth century, where Henry N. lived out his life, was known in the family simply as "Home."

So far Mildred Morton Watkins has appeared so seldom even in mention that Henry N. seems like a widower. The main reason is that few of her letters have survived; her arm had never recovered from an early injury, and writing was difficult for her. Usually she adds brief postscripts to her husband's letters: "It always falls to my lot to finish the letters that are begun, and the writer tires." She outlived her husband twenty-five years. It seems a little odd in the light of her age and their thirty-nine years of absolute devotion that Henry N. should have made a stipulation for a change in his will in case she remarried. Is he remembering that she had been a young widow when he married her, or is it one of his dry family jokes?

Chapter IV. The University of Virginia; the Arkansas Traveller; Indiana through Virginia Eyes; a Contagion of Marriages. 1850-1858

Henry N. Watkins left to his wife Mildred a life interest in his estate, and, except for the permanent removal of the Ballantines to Indiana in 1854, she held the family together at Oldham until three marriages in rapid succession during 1857-8. Mildred Watkins, a semi-invalid, reserved and austere, had the requisite force of character for a matriarch. She had always watched over her children as anxiously as her husband, and like him ruled more by affection than decree. She was as generous as lay in her power, granting Nathaniel sufficient to carry out his cherished wish for a year's graduate study at the University of Virginia in 1852, helping finance Richard's long journey to Arkansas for his health in 1853, and sending both sons in turn with Susan to consult doctors in Philadelphia in 1854. And when she realized in 1858 that Nathaniel's bride after a year at Oldham wanted a home of her own, Mildred Watkins understood at once and made the initial move to break up the old homestead and divide the patrimony.

This voluntary surrender alone proves that she sought no power over her children's lives. She was one of those rare people who rule without wanting to, and by demanding nothing for herself received more than she desired. Through no fault of her own, by merely being what she was, she had for a while a bad psychological effect on Susan, who was devoted and loyal but temperamentally aggressive. When Mildred went to live with her daughter in Susan's home, the concealed irritation immediately disappeared.

Richard, in writing to Nathaniel of her death in 1875, gives perhaps the best portrait of her:

> If there was one trait in our dear Mother's character which appeared more prominent than all the rest, I think it was her Christian fortitude and resignation. Did you ever think that thro' her long confinement which lasted for twenty years or more you cannot point to one single murmur or even the slightest expression of impatience? . . . When at times she would partially recover how quickly and joyfully would she resume her work, but when the swelling & stiffness returned would quietly lay it down again.
>
> The fashionable vices of the age seem never to have any attractions for her. Her dress was always plain & neat, never fashionable. She never owned any jewelry and I never saw her reading a book of fashions or a novel, and whilst her education was very limited, yet strange to say, men of the greatest ability & learning found pleasure in her society. . . . She was always a favorite of Judge William Leigh and many others I could name.

Much more than her husband, Mildred, with her scorn of fashions and of novels, her daily sessions of private prayer in the little upper locked room, was the fount of Puritanism in this family—a type as familiar in nineteenth century England as in America. Perhaps Nancy Daniel, used to the easy-going social life of Granville, found her mother-in-law dour. Yet there is ample proof from her scraps of letters and references to her that Richard's sketch in a moment of filial piety is not complete. From her confinement she followed all that went on with insatiable curiosity; she delighted in her quiet way in Richard's mimicry and in her irrepressible daughter Patty. She had spirit. When Patty's fiance, the elderly and slightly pompous Mr. Buck Scott, objected to the family's calling him irreverently "Bucky," she stamped her cane and cried, "Bucky! Bucky! I'll call you exactly what I please."

Whether or not they actually were, the fifties seem slightly more prosperous for this family than the forties had been. The letters show more bustle, more travel, more vital decisions. For one thing, all except Patty were now grown up.

Nathaniel, who had not been too happy during his two years' teaching, at first seems determined not to be happy at the University of Virginia, from which he writes to Richard October 4, 1852:

> Had I not fully made up my mind to spend one or two sessions here, I do really believe, that after finding out as much as I have, no consideration could induce me to remain; but having made up my mind to pursue the course before me, I am determined, under whatever disadvantages and inconveniences I may be compelled to labor, to carry it out.
>
> I was a good deal disappointed—I need not deny it—in everything around me. The village and its inhabitants, as far as I have seen them—the buildings of College—the country around--the scenery, and, in fact, everything else falls far below the idea I had formed. Yet the village and its people are like other villages and people; the buildings on college hill are beautiful; the country is fertile and well cultivated & the University (& everything connected with it) was, as far as comforts and conveniences are concerned, a nonpareil. I am not disheartened though, and shall make every effort to "get the worth of my money."

He sounds like a perfectionist with a touch of weltschmerz; but the answer is in the letter itself. He is "for the first time in my life really homesick" (he is still only 21); he finds all campus rooms taken and has to go to a boarding house; the course he is most interested in, Civil Engineering and Drawing, is not given. He compromises on two courses in mathematics, one in German, and one in French, and later decides to add a lifelong favorite, "Natural Philosophy." The lively member of the "Tuckahoe Boys" at Washington College is

developing moral fastidiousness:

> All the acquaintances, which I have found, are steady young men, of good families, high moral character, studious and sober. My roomate especially--a Mr. Taliaferro from the tide-water country—possesses all of these recommendations.

As Richard's earlier letter from Richmond shows, both boys set as much store by the calibre of their associates as their father could have wished.

Nathaniel became deeply attached to the University of Virginia (many of his meticulous, beautifully written lecture notes survive) and was constantly planning to return for further study up to the time of his marriage. A letter from C. R. Pryor, a college mate, characteristically acknowledging his repayment of loans, gives some idea of life there at the time:

> Madame Anna Bishop will sing tonight in Charlottesville--there is quite a "furore" amongst the students to hear her. Tickets are selling at Auction for choice seats in the town hall--just think of that.
>
> The fellows at Brock's have been quite moderate. Winston is still as interesting as ever. Miss Sophia has left us—in more than Egyptian darkness, & Miss Sallie is still singing "old folks at home" with as much discordant harmony.
>
> Dr. Smith is lecturing now on the metals proper. Iron was the subject of his last. "Iron—Fe; Equiv. 28; Density 7.8." Don't this remind you of the old Lecture Room, with Smith's big belly generally the most prominent feature in his lecture?
>
> Archer begs to be remembered most affectionately to you. We have our first examination on the 13th May. Pray for me, Watkins! and fast too.

Once he started settling down, Nathaniel went to extremes of studiousness. Excessive reading at the University started the headaches which plagued him the rest of his life. Richard is distressed to hear that he sits up too late and sorry "that I have not on hand at present enough chink to send you more than $40." Susan and his Mother seem dryly skeptical that Nathaniel has turned over a new leaf:

> Sue Venable introduced me to an old friend of yours at the Ct. House, Charles Lee of Lexington. He said he was very sorry he did not see you before you left. I hope you will get as clever a room mate as he seems to be, this session. . . . I have not seen or heard of your Ladly Love since you left, expect she is flirting with the Beaux, as usual. . . .
>
> Ma says, "Tell Nat after I heard what a motley crew he boards with I felt uneasy about him. I expect it is a wild set." . . .
>
> For the sake of your old mother and infirm Sister as well as

your own sake be very careful of your health as well as your good name, and do not yield to the first appearance of evil, take a firm and decided stand at first, and it will be easier to hold on, than after you have yielded, to withdraw.

You have naturally a strong constitution, which I think has been weakened from using tobacco too freely, which I will not ask you to give up now, but let that be the only stimulant [she has not forgotten the Womacks' party] you indulge yourself in. . . . Do not neglect regular exercise every day . . . rise early and take a little time from sleep rather than neglect this important duty.

But she breaks off this strenuous admonition characteristically:

I am afraid that if I go on in this strain you will throw my letter aside before you get through, but don't be afraid! I will not lecture you often—and as you are an old pupil of mine and the Brother on whom I feel most dependent when you are with me, I hope you will not get out of patience with me.

For all her cantankerousness, Susan was warmly affectionate, and Nathaniel was her favorite. Ten years after this, when he is in the Confederate lines, she tells him:

I want you just to write to me as you would to Nannie [his wife] when you want anything and I will send a box any time. You shall have anything we have.

If Nathaniel was plagued by nervous headaches, subject to alternating spells of indolence and intense energy, which he later learned to control; Richard about this time was threatened with serious lung trouble. Seeking a warmer winter he set out down the Ohio and Mississippi in the fall of 1853 to visit relatives in Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas. The river trip was highly uncomfortable one gathers from this incredible sentence which Nathaniel writes to him at Little Rock:

We were glad to see your last letter coming with so much better a complexion than the one written on the Ohio to Pattie. Don't wonder at the change though: for 'twould be strange if a letter written just before one of Cousin Ashley's good dinners, where you anticipated a meeting with learned judges, grave Senators, talented divines, with their good wives & a whole bevy of sweet, pretty, intelligent, accomplished cousins, all assembled to do honor to whom honor is due, isn't more rosy-cheecked than a lank, pale-visaged fellow indited on a dirty second-class steamer, hung high & dry upon a sand bar, the writer surrounded by none but strangers, irishmen, mules, braying jackasses both biped and quadruped, cholera & yellow fever fogs, etc. etc.—I say, 'twould be strange were a letter written under the former as lean-bellied as one written under the latter circumstances.

Nathaniel then discourses on the havoc caused in Prince Edward by "'the green-eyed monster' jealousy," tells how he is bored with hunting, chess, politics, alas "no Christmas Frolicks;" and closes with an account of opening the newly completed bridge on the South Side Railroad at Farmville:

> The first Engine will cross over tomorrow, when there will be a big supper given to the contractor, a good many men made drunk, a good many tar-barrels burnt, & a good many crackers popped.

This is all the occasion meant to him then. He had no suspicion how important completion of this railroad would be ten years later to the Confederacy, or that twelve years later he would be among the desperate, rapidly diminishing band under Lee trying to escape through Prince Edward down the Southside Railroad from burning Richmond.

This same Christmas week Richard was writing to him from Little Rock:

> Here again Dear Nat after a long trip through Ark:—Have been with Cousin Polly & the Misses Henderson on a visit to Judge Cross' family in the County of Hempstead. A Journey of 125 miles, the ladies in a carriage drawn by mules, the lawyer [himself] on a little sorrel mare--travelled 17 miles today through a terrible snow storm, & though not much in the spirit of letter writing will attempt a reply to yours received in Hempstead.
>
> Our journey was through the poorest part of the State, barren rocky hills covered with pine. The Sovreigns living in log houses, such as we build for negroes. No public houses, but every family willing to entertain for money. . . . The trip to me a pleasant one, notwithstanding the bad weather, bad roads, & worse fare.
>
> The scenes every night peculiarly rich. Last night we drove up to the house of a widow lady & asked permission to stay, which was readily granted. The house—two rooms & a little room about the size of a closet in the rear. Could sit by the fire and see skylight in every direction. No gentleman on the premises. The widow & her married daughter with two or three babies each. The floor of one of the rooms was swept, a large fire made, two beds prepared with one sheet on each (a pair seldom found in the country) and we were invited into it.

Here Richard recalls the famous concluding scene of Sterne's Sentimental Journey:

> All things passed off pleasantly enough until the old clock in the corner struck at nine, missing it by a leetle. The widow entered & modestly observed that she supposed we could all sleep in that room. Being always disposed to accommodate myself to circumstances, I at once acceded to the proposition. The young ladies blushed, Cousin P. looked a little queer, and promptly explained

the impropriety of such an arrangement. The widow on her part blushed, apologized--thought I was married &c. &c.

I at once saw the other alternative, that I would have to chum with the widow, but before I could bring out the suggestion she & Cousin Polly retired, held a parley & returned with the problem solved. I to take the large room & Cousin Polly & the ladies the closet, the widow not being sufficiently advised as to my character to trust me so near her Chamber. Q.E.D.—I awoke the next morning cold & shivering, heard a cackling in the loft & found that an old hen had roosted just over me.

And this is Arkansaw Nat.—

Night before last we met with a Mrs. Hunter of the Hot Springs—a semi-widow, having been twice married & her first husband still living. She fell out with him, drove him off; without judge or jury declared herself divorced, married the second, & the day after his death attended a Ball, took exception at some remarks of a young man, collared him & publicly cowhided him. This is no fiction, but true. She is still a buxom, blooming, tear-down widow, wears a red sack & is some in a bear fight. . . . All this is Arkansaw.

The night before that we stopped (is that right?) at Judge Little's. Called for his Honour, & the veritable individual appeared, about as tall as Cousin David Morton, a leetle bit knock-kneed, shoes coarse stitch-downs greased with tallow, a pair of tights of yellow jeans & a rounabout of the same material just reaching the lower extremity of the spinal vertebrae. A slough hat somewhat touseled (no doubt his Honour had been snoozing) and a sandy foxy beard about an inch long running down the side of his face, then gracefully over his upper lip, & up the other side, leaving the chin bare. Add to this a pair of small grey eyes & red cheeks & you have his Honour.

Here too skylight appeared in every direction, and I slept just under a pigeon's nest full of young. My ears constantly saluted with their disagreeable cry & with a noise not so loud but more disagreeable, an occasional dropping of guano on my bed. And this too is Arkansaw.

Judge Cross' family very kind & hospitable . . . lives in a fine large house about the size of brother Edwin's, the only pretty place that I have seen in the country. . . .

It is hard to see how such strenuous journeying through Arkansas snow could benefit weak lungs. Yet by the first of the year Richard felt so much better, or so exhausted, that he determined "to get home if possible to January Prince Edward Court without seeing Texas."

Hardly had he been home three months before something had to be done about Susan. In the letter to Nathaniel at the University she refers to herself as "infirm sister," and makes the startling comment:

I have many reasons for thankfulness. John Wadsworth takes

me out in the wheelbarrow [italics for once my own] every day and rides me around the premises.

Some years earlier Susan had been thrown by a horse. The injury was not serious, but instead of improving she got worse, finally ceasing to walk altogether. Doctor after doctor was tried, and finally in April 1854 Nathaniel took her up to Philadelphia, where the specialists pronounced her physically sound. Her condition was what we should today call psychosomatic, or possibly some form of hysteria; her Mother's withered arm may have had something to do with Susan's helpless leg. And so Nathaniel one evening at the hotel carried her into the middle of the room, told her frankly all that the doctors said, and that she would either have to walk or fall down. She walked. And once she found she really could, she was sensible enough to keep on, writing him in June (he had returned to Virginia, sending Richard up to be with her) with no grudge against him for his drastic treatment:

> Still I have improved much in walking and when I know that I am improving can put up with many inconveniences. Yesterday week went with Mrs. James twice to the Episcopal Church, not quite 2 squares, and yesterday went twice to Mr. Barnes' Church, 3 squares. I forgot Sunday two weeks ago was just able to cross the Street and go to Quaker meeting once. Don't you think I have improved? but I tell you I have to pay for it. After paying Mrs. Lloyd $40 and Dr. M. $50 I felt like going home, but Dr. says I must go to Cape May and I have to obey. . . .

This was the occasion when a drunken man offered to show them around Independence Hall, and they declined his kindness "though such politeness is so rare in Philadelphia" that Susan felt half inclined to accept.

Richard also complains ruefully of "a slight depression in the money market:"

> When I first arrived rode in a splendid hack, all bright and glittering, fine fat horses, etc. etc. Next day took the omnibus. Today felt too feeble to ride in a wheel barrow. First day strutted Chestnut–today put on old clothes and walked Dock Street. But mean to embark tomorrow for Cape May.

He seems to forget that his own family is Welsh in origin and had for a century been Quakers:

> This is the Quaker City. Oh save me from henceforth and forever from the Quaker City. Old Mrs. Lllloyd and Miss Susan Llllord. There is however a gentleman and his lady boarding here, quite genteel indeed, the lady a Marylander, truly a lovely woman. I refer to Mrs. James. Now when you read this don't for the world

call it Geemes, for should Miss Susan Llllоyd hear it she would be down upon you like a thousand of brick.

The Lloyds had Richard cowed. "I wish you could see Dick at table," writes Susan; "he looked like a fish out of water . . . eats what is set before him asking no questions. I looked round this morning and he was eating bran bread like it had been the nicest hot rolls."

January 1854 Nathaniel dreaded—"when, alas! I must bend down to the humble duties of an old-field pedagogue in Frog Level." Mary Ballantine writes an affectionate enquiry: "Do you feel very dejected and sad as you sit in your schoolroom with only William Jacob, Lucy Jane, and Betsey Ann before you, laboring and striving to 'teach the young ideas how to shoot'?" Education had now become a very practical family concern; only five years younger than he, she was herself teaching, and her father was casting about for a college opening. She is bursting with excitement, therefore, the following April:

Dear Uncle Nat,

I want to write and tell you some of the many things which have occurred since you were here, for I really feel as if I had lived almost an age since then. And first of all let me say we are all as busy as bees making up shirts, collars &c. &c for the P r o f f e s s o r! to take with him to Indiana!!! Yes tis really so—he has been elected and in less than two weeks our dear interesting little school will be disbanded, never to assemble again. It does seem sad to me—I am so much attached to the school and old schoolroom and the house,—and then 'tis so pleasant to work with Pa and to be near you all even if I don't see you often. I think sometimes I cannot go—but 'tis fated, and I must submit. Won't it be a change for us?

Last Tuesday was my birthday, Uncle Nat, and a most eventful one it was too,

and she proceeds to describe a busy parson's day:

In the first place Dr. Sampson was buried in the morning. . . . Just as they returned from the burial a man rode up to the gate and said he wanted Pa to come immediately up to the tavern to marry a couple who were expecting every moment some interruption to their proceedings. . . . He said she appeared to be about fourteen and he near thirty. By the time Pa got back home we were about ready to sit down to a birthday dinner, as I was seventeen. A little while after, old Dr. Liddle rode up and while he was fixing Pa's teeth the news came that he was elected Professor of Mathematics and Civil Engineering in the University of Indiana, to which was added teacher of French and German—And then such carryings-on you never did see! . . . I wanted to tell you of the interesting lectures we had from Mr. Dunning, but I find my head is so full of Indiana, I cannot think or write of anything else.

The first impression of Indiana University at Bloomington, and of the contrast between Virginia and the Midwest, comes not from Mary, however, but from her brother, Henry Watkins Ballantine, the following October: "I now sit me down to write to my youngest uncle:"

> I am a regular Junior—and have to study hard enough—for you know I was but poorly prepared in the languages. However I believe I am about as good as any in the class. . . .
>
> We are reading at present Juvenal & the Medea—and I take notes on a lecture on Rhetoric by the President. . . . There are but seven Juniors, so I have to read every tenth day. Chemistry we recite every day—& Mathematics twice a week—the Juvenal runs as easy as you please but the Greek don't.

Repeating precisely the concern with proper companions which his two uncles learned from their father, Henry N., he is pleased to write:

> I feel greatly favored in my associates.- They are all moral gentlemanly fellows. In fact there are but one or two rowdies in college & they are in the lower classes. There is all the difference in the world between this & Hampden Sidney—There the students are boyish, here they are manly—I don't believe that there's a student in college who is in the habit of drinking. They number about 80 in the college proper.
>
> I'm beginning to like Hoosier right well—I don't have to work, that is bodily, near as hard as I did in Virginia—It is true that I have to do some things that I would not do there. For instance immagine your largest nephew riding a bag of meal through main street. But Professor Read's son has to milk the cow, which I don't have to do as we have not gotten one yet. . . .

As a lawyer Richard Watkins' life naturally revolved around the Courthouse; Nathaniel frequented it, too, since it was a center of interest in a southern hamlet. Both during these last few years had been disgusted with Virginia politics as being stale, and to Richard "depraved." Here is Henry Ballantine's report from Indiana:

> I've heard more politics since I've been here than I ever heard in all my life together elsewhere. I heard Pettit the 'Old Brass Piece' the other day. He's the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senator. Several pieces of small arms were along at the same time also—There's to be some half dozen speeches this evening on the Kansas & Nebraska & Temperance questions by the candidates for county Surveyor, Sheriff, &c. &c. They bring politics into all such questions. . . . I must close this letter, as I want to go out & hear the politics this evening.

Mary writes next, opening with a matter-of-fact acceptance of

serious study which would floor any present day seventeen year old girl; her feelings about the "West" are mixed:

> Bloomington, Ind. Nov. 18th 1854.
>
> I generally devote my evenings to study, but there is always so much to be done by daylight that I have to steal an evening now and then from my study to write letters. As it is Saturday night my conscience don't hurt me so much for putting aside my books. I do thank you for writing to me. So far away as I am from my kin and all among strangers, I prize letters from my friends more than ever. . . .
>
> You can't conceive what joy Pa caused when he came in on Monday from College and announced that "the boxes were all here!" And oh how eagerly we did look into them—it seemed almost like seeing somebody from Va. again. . . . I wish you could step in and see how comfortably we are fixed and how nicely we do get along without darkeys. I must confess though that I miss them sometimes.

Since at this time neither slaves nor free Negroes were allowed to enter Indiana, Mr. Ballantine had persuaded his brother-in-law Richard to take his few Negroes off his hands—a transaction which many years later led to the only serious strain between the families. The Ballantines, at least in the letters preserved, give no evidence of knowing other Watkins descendants who had moved up to Indiana from Kentucky by 1850—Nantzes, Bainbridges, Venables, Malones, or Chases, who later went on to Illinois. There is initial homesickness in this new environment—"I like the West tolerably. . . the people are plain and kind, but they are not Virginians:"

> My work is to clean the house in the morning, and after that to sew until dinner. After dinner I look over my Latin lessons for the day—dress and go to school at half past two. I then practice half an hour and my recitations occupy me till after four. I then come home and do various little chores about the house. We take tea before dark and after worship is over Pa, Hal and I adjourn to Hal's room and study. I am studying French this winter. . . . My Latin classes get on very well and I love to teach them.

Then comes this elegant mid-century interior:

> Her father's house is the most splendid I have been in in Bloomington. The parlor had elegant Turkey carpeting on the floor—two large mirrors reaching to the floor—splendid piano—hairseat chairs—marble top centre table &c. I didn't know there was anything so nice here—I mean in such elegant style.
>
> But we are not so much out of the world as you Virginians [notice already the shifting of loyalty] think us and as I have been in the habit of thinking. . . . Wish you could come West to live, but

I reckon it wouldn't suit you—you are too fond of lying abed in the morning.

Christmas is almost here and I don't look forward to it—I have no Grandma's to go to. No Uncles and Aunts to make it pleasant. . . I expect mine will be occupied in retrospection and a little pleasant fit of the blues.

I went yesterday afternoon to hear the President's lecture to the Students. His subject was the "Spirit of the Age," his text Jehu's driving. I tell you 'twas a furious lecture. He is a very pompous kind of man. . . . I haven't written a decent letter since I got here. All my literary powers have deserted me since I turned maid.

Neither Mary nor Henry was long immune to the yeast of the new democratic spirit quickening Indiana during the eighteen fifties: the genuine social equality (which, however, was an exclusive prerogative of free whites), the political ferment, the feeling of dedication. This was the beginning of the Midwest's golden age. The revolutionary spirit animating Prince Edward and Charlotte some seventy-five years earlier had passed to Indiana and Illinois and Ohio. Now Virginia and the South, in their hapless desire to preserve the status quo, were drifting toward isolationism, which in its turn reappeared in the West toward the end of the century when enormous prosperity and satisfaction with political gains brought resistance to change. By 1920 isolationism had shifted completely from the South to the Midwest—partly because the issues were international, and (as Mr. Myrdal points out) in the international field the southern liberal, walking delicately like Agag on domestic issues, can let himself go.

Mary speaks of turning maid. In 1867 Patty Watkins writes to Nathaniel, as if it were a new discovery, that their niece "Mattie Watkins can clean up her room & set table & bring in breakfast, & her Ma thought she was a first rate maid. Her Ma cooked sometimes & her Pa cooked one breakfast." The Negroes were free. Southern women had to do what many of their northern cousins had done all along, what Mary Ballantine was learning to do in 1854. But we must remember that while Henry Ballantine was surprised to find himself carrying a bag of meal down the street and preparing to milk a cow, he actually found the physical labor less hard in Indiana than Virginia. The difference was mainly in kinds of work. As she supervised cutting and making clothes for twenty-odd Negroes, Mildred Watkins warns Nathaniel that she is entirely too busy to write; and this does not take into account supervision of larder, doling out food and medicine. Even a modest place like Oldham was for the woman of the house all the year round like a Midwestern farm at reaping time. And perhaps hardest of all her tasks was keeping the small Negro children playing around the house out of mischief and devising some occupation to keep the old and infirm Negroes, unfit for real labor, from utterly demoralizing idleness.

At first Henry Ballantine is mystified by some western customs:

> This morning I saw a sight that would seem strange enough to one coming from the East, but is not at all to a Hoosier. It was a young lady of a respectable family walking the public street with a pair of coarse men's boots on—coming up to her knees. And you know that the Western ladies always wear their dresses tucked up. The pantalettes are tucked into the boots & away they go through mud and mire. I can hardly hold in when I meet one of these ladies (?).

Six months later he changes his tune:

> 1855—I tell you what, Uncle Nat—these Hoosier ladies are hard to beat, they can just turn their hands to anything—little girls of the size of Anna & Lizzie will cook & wash as well as anybody. The other day Prof. Read and his wife went off, on a visit to Wisconsin—leaving five little children at home with nobody but Alice. Alice cooks & washes, sees to the children, & attends to the garden & everything else. The children all obey her, just as if she was their mother. What a care for one who is not yet 16 years old—what Virginia girl could do what she does?

A little slower in conversion, by this time Mary is equally enthusiastic, especially about woman's education:

> And then these girls are so thorough in everything they study—they mean to master a thing, not just to have it said they have been over it [she is echoing unconsciously her grandfather's advice to Nathaniel ten years earlier]. I'll tell you, Uncle Nat, if you want a well educated wife, get a Western girl. I haven't seen a girl here "stop school" and "turn out" because she had arrived at the age of eighteen or nineteen or twenty, even. They go until they graduate and take a diploma if they are twenty five. . . . I never saw education respected till I came West. . . .
>
> This speaking in public is the only part of the Western girl's education I object to—and that only because I don't see the object of it or what part of their life it seems to fit them for. I do not see that it injures their modesty, their manners, or their grace.

Exactly the southern girl Mary has in mind in drawing her contrast with the Midwestern type is provided by Lucy Daniel in a letter to her brother-in-law Nathaniel Watkins in 1863:

> Bella Daniel is going to Charlotte, N.C. to school in September; she says the old folks want her to go to school until she is twenty, but she is coming home in a year and turn out in spite of them.

In education of women southerners were some twenty years behind the Midwest.* For one thing they were inhibited by their code of the lady; for another they had relied too long and too exclusively on schoolteachers from New England. The Civil War changed all that. In February 1863 Nathaniel Watkins writes home that he approves his young sister-in-law's desire to become a teacher:

> I think it would be the best thing she could do, & would like so much to hear she had determined to do this. . . . The time has come when the ladies of the South will have to do such things—will have to supply every place that was before the war filled by a Yankee lady. I think Mildred fully as capable of teaching as Miss Sarah was when she began [Sarah Skinner, of Massachusetts, lived for years at Waterloo and taught the Daniel girls].

Then, as if this is too daring, he hedges:

> I don't mean by this that I think Mildred ought to make a teacher of herself, (though I don't see why not this), but that she might teach Mary Graham for some time, and in order to do this more effectually, she might take other little children around. . . .

With the generation after the War education of women came into full flower in the South. Economic and social changes completely altered the conception of what was suitable for a lady (with curious inconsistency these families had always considered their New England teachers ladies). All of Richard's and Nathaniel's daughters were educated to be school teachers. But the outstanding example among these families was Mildred Morton Watkins' great-niece Elizabeth Gaines of Charlotte County, whose heroic pursuit of education would have awed even the feminist Mary Ballantine in 1854. To quote from a Richmond editorial on her death in 1942:

> Miss Elizabeth Gaines, who was of the fine stock of Venable and Watkins and Read, as well as of Gaines, had one year of training at the Richmond Female Institute, about 1875. When she was 22 she went to Kentucky to instruct the children of her uncle's family and, in so doing, opened a school the neighbors were loath to have her close. With the funds she earned there, she spent a year at Vassar. Then, to save money for more schooling, she taught three years at the State Normal School in Farmville. Thereafter, she gained what she desired—instruction at M.I.T., at Columbia, at Chicago, in a widely diversified field of physical science, economics and

*It will, however, surprise many to learn that Wesleyan College for Women in Georgia (1836) antedates all the famous eastern colleges—Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Bryn Mawr. And the first State College for Women was founded at Columbus, Mississippi, in 1884.

sociology. In biology, which was perhaps her favorite science, she progressed so far that she was a welcome visitor to Woods Hole. For 23 years Miss Gaines taught biology at Adelphi College until, in 1916, she determined to come back to the old family home, "Do Well," in Charlotte County.

Intensely serious though she is, Mary Ballantine has humor; after her paean to Spartan education in the Midwest, she describes "the grand doings, which I would bet anything, no town in Va. of twice the size of this could beat:"

> The Baccalaureate was delivered Sunday afternoon. . . . Monday night the grove was lighted up and the Philomathean Society was addressed by a fellow from Cincinnati who preached two or three hours once in Washington for Pa, and whom I did not care to hear again. . . . Tuesday night we all dressed in our party rigging and went to the Campus where we heard a beautiful poem on "Love and Song," . . . and then a long prosy speech, on Education (I believe) am not certain from Judge Niles.

In her frequent criticism of oratory Mary sounds exactly like her Aunt Susan ("We heard a very dry and green—if the two words can be used thus—discourse from one of the Scuff brethren, I have forgotten his name").

> We then proceeded in procession, almost the whole audience, up main street at 10 o'clock, to the President's. He had an elegant supper, and after eating a few mouthfuls, and squeezing around, bowing and squealing in folks ears, and laughing at remarks we didn't hear Ma and I made a move to leave, and before 1 o'clock the company had all retired.
>
> Wednesday was the grand day. The Saxe-Horn Band made beautiful music for us, soft mellow music which made the "Academic groves" resound with melody. . . .

And so it went through Friday night, until by Saturday "the town looks desolate."

Nathaniel had urged Henry Ballantine to join him for a year or two at the University of Virginia, which Henry, despite his new loyalty to Indiana, considered "as much above the common college as a common college is above Coburn's school;"

> I would like of all things to "chum" with you there. . . . Pa said he couldn't look so far ahead--However Ma has always been "in for it." I think Pa might afford it—he sent down to Louisville the other day for a $325 piano, for a birthday present for Sister. As for your kind offer of paying my ticket fees &c.—I can't hear of that—I've got no notion of being dependent on anybody. However I thank you for the will.

To pay their own way and preserve independence he and a college mate determined to sell maps during the summer. Mary's comments on this scheme indicate that rural Indiana was not unlike the rural Arkansas discovered by her Uncle Richard:

> Hal says he expected to see Hoosier life in its natural state before he comes back. Some night, I tell him I expect when he asks at a log cabin for lodgings he will be shown to a place where the pigs lie underneath the floor, the children and he will be expected to take it under the bed and over the pigs, and the old folks above all—fleas being poured through to fill the interstices. But his enthusiasm is not to be damped—and Pa says it won't hurt him to see some of the world. . . .
>
> If you love me and would like to gratify me just write me a great long letter. I want one from you so much.

In December of this year (1855) Elisha Ballantine writes to his young brother-in-law:

> Dear Nat
>
> Mary & your Sister looked out for you last Thurs. night, but the cars brought your letter instead of yourself, and destroyed our hopes of seeing you—We shall have to eat our pumpkin pies, stewed peaches & milk, fresh tomatoes &c. this Christmas without you.

Mr. Ballantine was trying to wangle a professorship for Nathaniel—"I can say this—I have kept out another man already who was strongly backed;" and his letters give an amusing insight into academic politics of the period. In the spring of 1856 Nathaniel paid his deferred visit to Bloomington, and the matter hung fire throughout the summer, until he made up his mind to marry Nancy Daniel and remain in Virginia.

Nathaniel had always been highly susceptible; early letters are full of references to his girls. We have heard his Mother upbraiding him for writing to Peggy Dupuy instead of to her; and Susan of course was onto all these affairs:

> As soon as we got in speaking distance Sarah Ligon halooed at the top of her voice to know if you had gone home, and what you had done with her ring! She came to Uncle Joe's once after that, and was worse than I ever saw her; she told me to give a great deal of love to you. . . .

None of his letters to Nancy Daniel before marriage survive (probably intentionally destroyed, though the rigid conventions of the day would make them most genteel reading): but he recalls their courtship during the War with an intensity that troubles his sentences:

1862—Oh Darling, I sometimes feel that I would give my right hand for an hours talk with you—to look into your eyes & have you talk to me as you used to, & to tell you how much I love you & live for you. I frequently feel now as if I must sit down and write you a long letter—not such as I would write my wife,—but such as I often wished to write you before we were married. I frequently think of you now just as I did then, and think of some particular times & places, when I thought I had discovered beyond a doubt, that you really did return all my love in all of its depth. I would then look into your eyes sometimes for minutes and see there how much you did love me, and didn't care or couldn't help showing it.

And then I often think of you now, as you were after we were married & I had learned to know and love you even better; and how I used to feel when you freely told me how you loved me--as you were when I left you, after we had lived together for years, and God had given us little Charley & Minnie to strengthen and sober our love;--and how I lived & loved, as a man lives and breathes, scarcely conscious of it, so much had it become a part & necessary condition of my very existence. But I know now that I know you better, that I love you better, esteem you more deeply, & am more dependent on your love & good opinion than I ever was before.

I know if another should read all this, they might think it somewhat silly or unmanly, but you won't, Darling, and this is why I am not ashamed to write it.

And she responds in kind:

1863—How I do wish for the close of this bloody & useless war. I just look on and wonder what the end will be. People are beginning to feel it now as they never have before. The desire to make money and grow rich has taken possession of a great many, and this class do not care how long it continues. Oh how heartless they must be. I never thought as little of money in my life.

I want all of our boys to come home. . . . I cannot allow myself to think or hope for such a thing, it is too much happiness even to think of. Oh! Darling, I love you I love you so dearly.

With their marriage in December 1857 Nathaniel's vacillations ceased and his life came finally to focus. It was a gala affair. Susan had married the widower, George Redd, six weeks before, and after a wedding trip to Washington and Bloomington, Indiana, had brought back Mary Ballantine to represent her branch of the family. The whole connection in Prince Edward journeyed en masse to Granville for the occasion, which was also a family reunion of Venable-Watkinses and Venable-Daniels. Only Richard was not present. Ill health had again forced him south, this time on horseback accompanied by a Negro servant, Milton, to Savannah, where he caught a

boat for Cuba. Even there it was so cold that he threatened to "ride down and hang a thermometer on the other side of the Equator."

> Walked out again after an early breakfast at 9 1/2 o'clock, quite early for breakfast in Cuba, sauntered along the beach watching the pelicans catching fish, then upon the wharves where several vessels were discharging cargoes of fish (dried) rice &c. &c. and reloading with sugar & molasses. Went into the bull ring which is undergoing some repairs preparatory to Sunday amusement, then into a coffee house where gentlemen were playing billiards and betting at dominoes, the favorite game of the Spaniards. Looked in awhile, gathered a few Spanish words. . . .
>
> I meet with men from every country here. On coming from San Antonio, an African got our tickets for us, an American was the engineer of the train, a Spaniard the conductor, and Chinese were breakmen. How much to be pitied are the poor Chinese, always dejected, always suffering from excessive cruelty of their masters or from the severity of the climate. . . . The negroes are contented and happy, even more so than with us. Very much poverty among the whites, very little learning. . . .

He spent four months rambling over the island, visiting plantations, noting agricultural methods, meeting people from everywhere and enjoying himself. He writes to his mother, Mildred Watkins:

> How would you like for me to bring home a fair Creole with hair black and profuse, eyes dark, lustrous & beautifully expressive. One who owns a large sugar estate and speaks pure Castilian and nothing else; attended also with negroes dressed in livery and Chinese in oriental costume? Don't be frightened, Dear Ma, for nothing is farther from my purpose than to bring home the aforesaid menagerie. Indeed am apprehensive that your garden would not afford onions and garlic enough. . . .

He is anxious for Patty not to be in a hurry to marry herself off, to wait till summer; for marrying was obviously contagious just then. Nine months later Richard himself married Mary Purnell Dupuy, a neighbor, daughter of Colonel Asa Dupuy and his Massachusetts wife, Emily Howe, who lived at Linden.

In July 1858 Lizzie Ballantine (fourteen) writes from Indiana to her new Aunt Nancy:

> I don't remember of ever having seen you and so don't know you, but as Mary is going to write and it is vacation and I haven't much to do I will write to you too. . . .
>
> One of the Trustees told Ma that he believed at the next commencement he would open a room for all the ladies who came to go into and drop their hoops so that more people could get into the Chapel, and when they went out they might go by the room and put them on again. . . .

> There were fifteen speeches, eight in the morning and seven in the afternoon. . . . About nine o'clock Anna & I began to get sleepy so we locked up the doors and went to bed in Ma's bed and put Fannie & Willie in the trundle bed. Ma & Pa came home about eleven but the girls did not get home till after midnight.

Mary's letter was delayed till December, and by then Mildred Watkins had divided the estate: Richard took Oldham; she and Patty went to live with Susan Watkins Redd at nearby Shenstone; Nathaniel purchased Brookland in Granville. And so Mary, who always loved Oldham, where she had been born, writes sorrowfully:

> Now I expect you have left the dear old homestead and are settling yourselves in a home of your own, in the old North State. I wish I could come and see you.
>
> Last winter about this time I was just beginning that delightful visit, which I enjoyed so much, and which I now love to look back upon. How different is everything now! and what changes one single year sometimes reveals. I know Aunt Nannie is delighted to live so near her home—and I know too that Grandma and Patsy hated dreadfully to give you up—I got a long letter from Pat telling about the sale &c. I think Grandma must feel these changes very much now at her time of life. I wish she could come here & live with us.
>
> Pa is going to have his two hogs killed this afternoon—he bought one ready killed last week and we have been having as much fresh meat as you all do when you kill sixty—in proportion I mean [in other words, the Ballantines had no Negroes to feed]. . . . By the way we never heard who Aunt Priscy [Negro] fell to in the division & who got Aunt Charlotte [Negro]. Nobody has ever told us one word about any, but what Cousin Will Morton drew.
>
> Anna and I with some other girls are forming a kind of Society for the improvement of our minds & manners. We read compositions & then converse on Literary topics. We don't intend to have any public exhibitions as most of the Western Societies do. . . . It will be of great benefit to us if it lives.
>
> Ma says she is real homesick, she wants to go back & see you all so badly. . . .

Chapter V. Life in Granville, North Carolina; Brookland and the Reads of Tennessee. 1858-1859

There was a spate of letters in 1858 from Waterloo in Granville County, North Carolina, to Oldham in Prince Edward. Nancy Daniel was the oldest child and the favorite of her family, and during this year when she and Nathaniel Watkins lived at Oldham her young

brothers and sisters not only wrote constantly but visited. Except for their increased frequency, there was nothing new in these visits; for Granville was virtually an offshoot of Prince Edward and Charlotte. It was just over the border; the Brookland property actually ran right up to Byrd's dividing line. Nancy's aunt had married Nathaniel's uncle. Nancy's father, James Beverly Daniel, through the Venables was a first cousin of Henry N. Watkins, though twenty years his junior; following the family pattern, he had been graduated from Hampden-Sydney in 1825.

The Daniels were also devout Presbyterians, but life at Waterloo was less austere than at Oldham; there was more money (also more extravagance) and a more easy-going atmosphere of uninhibited fun. On his way to Cuba in 1857 Richard had written to Nathaniel from South Carolina: "Will do you the honor to say that the most pleasant evening spent since leaving home was that at Mr. Daniel's. Very sweet girls & very good kind old folks. Wish I could take off old Jimmy before Ma, think 'twould amuse her." Richard would esteem them even more when they took him in, sick and disconsolate, after the Surrender in 1865. Transformed by his marriage from a youngest to an eldest brother, Nathaniel's melancholy moodiness melted away and he expanded in the voluble affection of his wife's young brothers and sisters.

Life at Waterloo during the fifties, with its simple pleasures, its highly developed code for young ladies and gentlemen, its moral values and propriety, its sense and sensibility, might almost have been contrived by Jane Austen—except that it is more boisterous, as social life in the United States, not long removed from the frontier, was more boisterous than in England. Every now and then Fielding or Smollett lends a hand. From all the trivia and the teasing in these numerous letters from the young Daniels to Nathaniel and Nancy one gets a detailed picture of life among people of this sort. If their interest seems at times too much restricted to their own relatives, the circle was wide, and it was almost impossible to escape relatives; for the Granville neighborhood was populated by Venables, Daniels, Watkinses, Carringtons, Lewises, Reads, who had moved down from Virginia; with them the North Carolina Taylors, Boyds, Baskervilles, Burwells (originally from Virginia, too) had already intermarried. And it must be borne in mind always that the frequent sharp criticism throughout these letters, especially during the Civil War, is seldom complacent censure of outsiders, but concerns members of the large family connection. They had a very precisely defined code of conduct and never hesitated to criticize each other for deviation.

Courtships, marriages, and rumors of marriage were a favorite theme; so-and-so is always "laying siege" or being "discarded," or sometimes if a woman "blooming alone." Nathaniel laid elaborate traps for his wife's brother, Charles Read Daniel, at this time a

somewhat esthetical young man of twenty, fond of the violin and literature. He admonishes Nathaniel after returning to Waterloo from a visit:

> You say the theory in Prince Edward is that I was not liked or did not like at Mrs. Dupuy's. Still you are generous enough to give me a choice of two positions. What do you build theories upon? On dreams I expect. Let me inform you that neither plausibility nor even probability enter into the composition of the magnificent aircastles on which you have dreamt & labored so diligently of late. You are truly "a fellow of infinite jest & most excellent fancy." . . . Consider that all your suspicions are bare conjectures & the offspring of a morbidly visionary brain.
>
> My trip has given rise to a great deal of small talk & wild speculation in this neighborhood. I did not hear a greater number of theories in regard to the comet last June. "Oh! what an appalling thing to be a courting man." Quantum sufficit. . . .
>
> Cousin Nat, why did you poison Mrs. Booker's mind with such a belief? No doubt when she saw me coming she "smiled in her sleeve" & diverted herself with many amusing & fantastic imaginations & conceits, she thought that a courting man had come with all his subtle arts & arguments watching for a chance with the most intense anxiety. Expect she & Mr. Booker had no little fun to see a young man of bashful disposition "leaning up to the fair one." . . . Mr. Booker more than once put on a mighty wise & knowing look as if he knew which way the wind was blowing, and several times I saw a mischievous, ludicrous smile on the old lady's face. All this time I was the intended dupe of a deeply laid plot suggested by yourself. . . .
>
> I am likely to soon fall in the hands of the law, for the neighbors have me engaged to Miss Sarah & Nannie or Margaret Booker, & if I am a man of my word this will inevitably lead to bigamy & bigamy to trial & the Penitentiary. Oh! what shall I do? Whither shall I fly? If I am not a man of my word I will be in the situation Dr. Pettus was in. He was challenged to a duel. I must apologize or fight, but I will apologize, of course. . . .

But even esthetical, frail young Charles was no loafer:

> Are you weeding corn? I will finish to-morrow if not prevented by rain. I am using a plow of the best construction I ever saw. It consists of two coulters on opposite sides of a beam 3 1/2 inches thick, the coulters having each a moleboard about the size of the hand. It throws fine dirt to the corn & breaks the earth at the same time. . . . Do you cultivate corn with harrows? When you next come over, please bring that book which explains the nice case of instruments you gave me. I wish to turn them to profitable account. Kiss Cousin Pat & Sister for me, & crack them soundly if they don't answer my letters shortly. . . .

As Henry Ballantine remarked earlier, the young southerner of this class was expected to work; furthermore, a surprising number, like Nathaniel and his brother-in-law Charles, were interested in improved methods of farming, in instrumental and scientific helps. Men like them should have come along four generations earlier.

After another visit to Prince Edward Charles writes to his sister Nancy:

> I stood the ride on the cars very well, & we had no mishap with the exception of Eppie's losing her entire hoop skirt as she was getting off the train at Scotsburg, which seemed to distress her no little. That part of the dress which ladies have in common with hogsheads, tubs & barrels ought to be dispensed with while travelling.
>
> We had not been long at the depot before Pa's buggy & Mr. Hines' carriage drove up amidst the hugest volume of dust I ever saw. Got to Aunt Nancy's at 5 P.M., staid all night & spent the next day at the Springs—Nicest crowd there I ever saw before—About 450 persons—Great many of my Acquaintances.
>
> Ma went to Buffalo Springs on the 18th & returned on the 23rd. When she started from home she could not walk, but she was so improved by the ride that she was able to walk from the gate to the house when she got to Aunt Nancy's. She would have stayed a day or two longer but Aunt Mary Booker & Cousin Fannie Daniel, Sue & Tom were expected & Ma thought 'twould crowd Aunt N. too much. Paulina Daniel came in the Thorp with Jimmie. Sister Martha went to Buffalo with Ma & will stay at Hong Kong. . . .

This is characteristic. Friends and relatives were always "expected," and came, expected or not. How this steady stream of guests were housed remains a mystery, though the men and women doubled up.

Unlike her brother Charles, Martha Daniel did not find the crowd at the Springs choice on this occasion:

> the very hardest looking set you ever saw anywhere. Cousin Jimmie says there are only two gentlemen there and they are drunk the whole time. Mr. Boice of Texas is there. He is quite a fine looking gentleman; but he had been tipsy a good part of his time, and consequently I haven't been introduced to the young man.
>
> There will be a balloon ascension the 8th & tournament the 9th of this month. Emily Howerton will be crowned Queen of love & beauty. I have heard she is deaf, but very pretty. Don't think I should feel honored by the crown at a masqued ball. . . . Mr. Pope was at the Springs last week. I heard him play—never heard such music before in all my days—felt like I never wanted to hear another Piano after hearing him. He played Gentle Annie with variations, decidedly the prettiest thing I ever heard. . . . There was another Pic-nic at Yancy's—understand they had a very genteel crowd. . . . .

[illegible]

Gentle Annie with variations! Mr. Pope's virtuoso performance was no doubt being reduplicated on hundreds of pianos in hundreds of genteel music rooms throughout the nation.

Martha's and Charles' and Nancy's mother, like Nathaniel's, was a semi-invalid. Did all southern women ail in this way? But sick or well a favorite diversion of all these people was an outing at the Springs: Buffalo, Rockbridge Alum, Alleghany, and occasionally White Sulphur. One of the virtues of the Springs was simply the sight of new faces, though Charles Daniel writes on a round of White Sulphur and Alleghany that he had run into Cousins Abram Venable and George Tarry already. Charles needed more than drinking the waters could do for him; he died two years later.

These southerners were insular but by no means insulated from the outside world. There was a surprising number of visitors from the North, most of them friends made through the Yankee schoolteachers who had come south. Several letters from New England friends of the Daniels have been preserved, enough to indicate steady visits and letter-writing over a period of years. Travel was usually by boat between New York and Norfolk, by "the cars" to Granville or Prince Edward. Martha Bliss had written in 1854 to Nancy Daniel from Shelburn, Vermont:

> We had not a very pleasant time on the cars, it was so very warm, & dusty, you would hardly have known what was the original color of my dress when I arrived in Norfolk. . . .
>
> We enjoyed our stay in New York very much. We were at the Crystal Palace, but there is little to be seen there now besides the paintings, & many of them are taken away; however, we heard Jullien's band perform, who I suppose are the best players in the United States, or were, for I believe they are gone now. After about a week in the city we went to Saratoga, where we found the water as delicious & the walks as pleasant as usual. . . .
>
> Please say a kind word of remembrance to the servants [house Negroes] for me, particularly Aunt Betsey & Aunt Maria, Evelyn, & Annie. . . .

And six years later, on the very eve of the War:

> I often think I should like to visit the South now. . . . I suppose it looks quite like Spring with you. We have had some warm weather, but today it snows and the wind blows. . . . Is Aunt Betsey [Negro] still living? tell her I have not forgotten her, & Annie too. . . .
>
> Give a great deal of love to your Mother. If any of you ever come north, you must not fail to come & see us. . . .

In the meantime Charles Read Daniel was writing to Martha Bliss' brother Esham; they were great friends. But another northern visitor he found puzzling:

Did you see the elephant Henry Skinner? How do you like him? He was too much of a Yankee for me. I did not have much fun at Mrs. Dupuys on his account, for he would sit up & look so grave when I would say anything that I meant to be ever so funny.

Ma says she intends to write to Miss Sarah & try to get her to teach here again this fall. . . .

Miss Sarah Skinner had been an intimate member of the Waterloo household for years. About this time she writes from there to Nancy Daniel Watkins at Oldham a typical school-teacher "epistle:"

Dear Cousin Moderation,

Having just finished a letter to Aunt Anna my spirits prompts me to gather up the scattered remnants of ideas and put them in a tangible form for the edification of my dear Nannie.

The girls are all breathing forth a sermon from the text "so He giveth his beloved sleep," your sister Martha is sitting by me writing. the distant sounds of your brother's violin reminds us that he is whiling away his lonely hours by paying his devoirs to his favorite Apollo. your papa has just passed the collonnade door to take his drink of water, the turkies have just passed the watchword from yonder roost; thus you will see that home affairs are wagging on in the usual course. . . .

I do wish you could have taken a walk with us this evening. We started for the overseer's house over the creek, the girls were afraid to walk the log and so adopted the equestrienne fashion. After walking a long distance through the ploughed field we found night ready to drop her sable curtain. . . . After arousing several hogs from their downy slumbers and getting our hands and faces well scratched by thorns we reached a small branch. I thought to leap over and like our horseback ride missed the opposite bank and came plump into the stream. . . .

But when she got back to Massachusetts Miss Skinner decided to remain:

I can't refrain from writing a few lines, although it is late and necessity compels me in this land of steady habits to be up with the lark and down with the lamb, me thinks you will say she has turned a new leaf. . . . I had a slight touch of the 'blues' on our journey, being a little seasick and car sick, then leaving all my dear friends—if Aesop had made his appearance I could not have coined a simile.

I do wish you were here to attend the prayer meetings. About thirty in this town have begun the new life, and it is truly refreshing as one and another arise and relate the dealings of the Spirit in their hearts. The number of conversions in New England is thought to be more than 11000 and more than two thirds are in Massachusetts. . . .

> You can't imagine how anxious I am to hear from my Carolina friends. . . . Oh dear, if I only had you close to me, you were such a comfort. Give my best love to your mother, sister, and last but not least your husband. Please write as soon as convenient, my poor heart is aching to hear from you. . . .

Except for one tactless suggestion of Miss Skinner's, the correspondence was picked up with the same warm friendliness after the War. She writes from Massachusetts in 1867:

> Can it be that it is more than seven years since we parted in that bright spring morning? . . . With how few forebodings we bade each other adieu. What a wise provision of Providence to veil the future from our eyes. Our hearts would always be weighed down with grief, our tears would never cease to fall if the future with all its sorrows and changes was known to us.
>
> I do so long to hear from you, your father's family and [sister] Mrs. Graham. Is the Shiloh church as flourishing as ever? Your aunt's kindness to me will never be forgotten. Would that I could make some slight return for the many services you and your friends have rendered me when I came among you a stranger with habits and feelings so different. You bore with my shortcomings and opened your doors wide to receive me, and never, dear Nannie, in all my varied experiences since have I found a friend so loving and tender, so sincere and trustful as you. . . .

As late as 1885 Miss Skinner is still sending loving "remembrances of auld land syne:"

> May I not hope you yet cherish kind recollections of the "Yankee" teacher who will never cease to love "cousin Moderation," the dear Nannie whose gentle ways and loving heart did so much to make my life at your home so pleasant. My heart is too full for utterance to-night, when I think of the experiences we have passed through, the dreadful war, the dear, dear friends who have gone to Heaven, the many changes which time has wrought. . . .

In October 1858 Nancy Watkins writes her sister Mildred Daniel that her mother-in-law is "very busy having the Negroes clothes, and Pattie thinks she will have her hands full as she will have all the cutting out to do," jubilantly adding that Brother Will has bought the "old home!" But, as usual, Brother William refused to be pinned down. Three days later plans are changed and Nancy writes her father:

> Brother Dick has bought the old place and 720 acres of land at $16 an acre. . . . The rest of the land will be sold to the highest bidder. I think Mr. Watkins [Nathaniel, her husband] is delighted with his trade in Carolina. I am so glad you helped him out so much. He thinks you are the greatest old gentleman he ever saw.

You all must have treated him mighty well, for I never saw him better pleased than he was when he came home. . . .

Nancy had every right to be pleased herself, for purchasing Brookland, just a few miles from Waterloo in Granville County, fulfilled a cherished sentimental dream of hers. Her grandfather, Charles Lewis Read, had bought it in 1819 and added a large wing to the side of the original eighteenth century cottage. This was a departure from the curious custom usually followed by these families. Both Oldham and Waterloo were expanded in the nineteenth century by building a new series of parlor, sitting rooms, bedrooms back of the original small house, which was then turned into dining-room, scullery, pantries, nursery; at least this method preserved the eighteenth century part intact at what was now the rear. Brookland was a simple but attractive house, with unusual wainscoating, stairway and mantels handcarved by Negroes trained in carpentry. Fifteen years ago, though a ruin, it was intact and still inhabited by some tenant farmers. Now [1950] it has been dismembered, part made into a tobacco barn. But the carved woodwork was rescued.

Nancy was barely old enough to remember her grandfather's sale of Brookland to move to Tennessee in 1838 with other Reads, Boyds and Taylors; but she remembered enough to have a deep attachment to the place. Dr. Charles Lewis Read (1794-1869)—after graduation from Hampden-Sydney he took a degree in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania; neither institution can be proud of his spelling—is in direct contrast with his son-in-law, James B. Daniel, who out of sentiment and tradition clung to his ancestral land. Dr. Read was a rover, as all the Lewises had been and many of the Reads. He was the great grandson of Robert Lewis of Belvoir and of Charles Lewis of The Byrd, both of them younger sons who had left the Lewis eyrie, Warner Hall, down on the York River near Gloucester, and moved up into Albemarle to intermarry with the huge Meriwether family, become intimates of Jefferson, and send their sons roving still further down through Cumberland and Charlotte to North Carolina and out through Tennessee and the west. Charles Read's older brother Howell in 1821 sold the old Clement Read place in Charlotte (the house, Bushy Forest, had previously burned) to John Randolph of Roanoke for $19,500. During the sale John Randolph kept quiet, but afterwards he scathingly denounced a man who would sell the graves of his ancestors." But not even a Randolph could abash a Lewis-Read who knew what he wanted and refused to be tied to ancestral graves.

Charles Read was not one of the worst miners of the soil, but there is no question that he farmed for profit, and as soon as he realized that Brookland was too exhausted to yield rich returns, undeterred by sentimental attachments, he set his face westward, aged 44, to begin a new life with his second wife in the cotton country of west Tennessee. Exchanging the comforts of Brookland for a pioneer log cabin

dismayed him not a whit, so long as the land around the log cabin was productive. He was the richest of these letter-writers; he had contributed much to establishing his daughter Jane Read Daniel's family on such a comfortable basis at Waterloo, just as in his turn James Daniel helped his son-in-law, Nathaniel Watkins. By his two wives (the first a Boyd, the second a Daniel) Charles Read had fifteen children, over whom he watched with benign and shrewd eyes like the patriarch he was. This is no place to open the floodgates of the Read correspondence, except for a few letters bearing on this story.

For years Read had pled with his son-in-law, James Daniel, to sell Waterloo and join him in Haywood County, Tennessee, near Memphis:

> 1844—My son Charles I have sent to help you and Jane & children out to this far west. I hope you will make no excuse, and that you will not dodge the question as the Whigs do, but make all needful prepirations and start as soon as you can, and with cheerful hearts and steady firm steps press forward untill you arrive at my log cabin on Green Plain, where you will be greeted with a hearty welcome.
>
> I wish you to collect all the money due me if it is possible. . . . Bring all the children with you. I want to see all.

Some of the Reads had clung to Episcopalianism, but Charles was a Presbyterian elder and set up new churches, invariably called Nutbush, wherever he went. He frequently sounds like someone out of the Old Testament:

> 1847—I am informed in your last that my Dear Jane is improving, it fills my heart with grateful acknowledgements to my heavenly Father for his goodness to my Daughter.
>
> You have greatly cheered my hart on the subject of your mooveing to this country. I hope you will be more and more inclined to come every time you seriously think of it, and at last come to a settled determination to sell out and take up your all and march boldly and fearlessly to this land of great promise.
>
> In prosperity this country got in debt; in adversity it extricated itself, and now we are reaping from a full crop of cotton, a full price, we are growing rich; and it is a climate not only for cotton, the staple of the world, but for all of the necessary of life. It is now pretty much believed that ours is the safest cotton climate; say from a little north of me to one hundred miles down in Mississippi State. Below the enemies to the crop are very fatal. . . .
>
> I made a very good crop of cotton and expect to realize more than as much again as I have from any one crop before. I have sold to the amount of $2000 and expect to get $1200 or 1400 for what is yet to sell, and I make a plenty of all necessaries.

Though he had caught the cotton fever, like the rest of the family he was concerned with other things:

> I have James at school about 22 miles from home at one of the best to prepare him for college. It is under the control of a Presbiterian minister, it is an Academy in the country. . . . The girls are still at school in Brownsville. They are making great proficiency in Music, they are fond of it and play without embarrisment in any company.

And the final inducement, sounding like a chamber of commerce:

> Just look at our rich lands (virgin soil) our numerous navigable streams, our staples, our markets. Memphis & New Orleans—we are selling all our cotton now in Memphis. You know its rapid groth & increased capital—we do all our trading there. Our Hatchie Steam Boats that carry from 500 to 900 Bales of cotton run five months with a good flood. We can put all our cotton or a part on one Boat, go down and sell in Memphis, buy our Groceries and back home in six days, at a cost of only six dollars to the passenger and 3/4 of a dollar per Bale cotton. . . .

Thus year after year he bombards James Daniel with blandishments. In so doing he reveals himself clearly:

> 1849—I have not corresponded with you and my Dr. Jane quite as often as I formerly did, although I answer all of your letters and more besides. I have been trying to get my children to write to you all frequently (and relieve me as I am not fond of letter writing) but I do not succeed in this plan.
>
> It has been said that I do not write as often because I have but a small temporal interest there. That is perhaps a severer censure upon my motives than I deserve. I have yet a monied interest of abt. $8 or 900--besides Clarksville property. I acknowledge I love my interest dearly and I know I am tenderly attached to my Dear Children. A sincere desire to get your family to this country, and hoping I could prevail on you to moove, stimulated me to write often; but that hope now is so faint that it fails of its influence upon me to write. . . .

Old Charles Read was solicitous about his worldly affairs, frankly interested in making money and keeping it; but he was a fair and just man, very generous to his fifteen children, countless grandchildren, and friends, devoted to their welfare and anxious for them to grow up and prosper around him. If his farming was wasteful, it was through ignorance; he did not ruthlessly despoil the land for three or four crops. And if he abandoned Brookland without a qualm when it began to go down hill, at least he realized that the land was not only poor, the clay subsoil made drainage defective. It was a sad irony that

uxorious Nathaniel Watkins, the most brilliant farmer these families produced—with natural aptitude, scientific training of a sort, vision—should have largely wasted his gifts on this inferior as well as exhausted soil.

The Read letters are full of interesting details about treks back and forth between North Carolina and west Tennessee—often astonishingly roundabout: up the Mississippi and Ohio to Pittsburgh and New York or Baltimore; by boat to Norfolk; then home by boat to Mobile or New Orleans and back up the River. Until "the cars" made partial connection, they never seem to have repeated the difficult overland route. Old Charles Read himself made the trip twice, in 1853 and 1858, which is more than can be said for his son-in-law; once was enough for him. With the stiff formality of the period, Charles Read always addresses James Daniel "My dear Sir" until his last letter, when his son-in-law is forced into bankruptcy in 1869, for the first and only time he writes "My Dear Son."

One final paean of thanksgiving rounds out his portrait—to his daughter, Jane Read Daniel, in 1858:

> I am particularly gratifyed to hear of Nannies marriage to such a worthy young man as described by you & that her choice has given such satisfaction, & one in whoom she can repose entire confidence as a companion & helpmeet for life. May God bless them in their matrimonial connection & conjugal affection & in all their spiritual & temporal interest.
>
> I am in favour of early marrying when connected with a judicious choice & meeting with the approbation of Parents. Tell Martha, when she has a good chance & her feelings are enlisted, with consent of Parents, to lay hold. I like to hear of my Grand Children marrying well. . . .
>
> You spoke of your fine crops. Truly the Lord has been good to us two, he has caused the Earth in this region to yeald her increase & brought forth an abundance both for man & beast, a plenty of bread for the eater, and seed for the sower; he has filled our barns with plenty even to overflowing & has filled our hearts with joy & gladness. . . .

Nancy Daniel Watkins names her firstborn Charles Read Watkins after this great-grandfather of his. Richard Watkins from Linden in Prince Edward salutes Nathaniel, the father of this first of the new generation, February 1859:

> Venerable Parent:
>
> Allow me to congratulate you on the recent and interesting accession to the 'diminutive' family of Watkins . . . . I was just on the point of making a most pathetic allusion to the fate of poor Frank Nat, doomed as he is to write, write, write, appendix after Finis & addenda after Appendix as the descendants of the renowned

> Chickahominy roll on in almost geometrical progression, when it was announced that Dr. Eggleston was below stairs & had to be entertained.
>
> His coming is heralded as a great event. The way that Cousin Joe has of sitting on his horse, the way he has of taking off his little black saddle-bags & hanging them on his arm and walking into the house slightly sideways & a little pigeon-toed. The way he has of combing or not combing his hair, of looking masonically and winking masonically. All these form interesting subjects of discussion after Cousin Joe has gone, and then none can relate so well as he the stirring intelligence from 'Marble Hill.'

Again Richard seems slyly to have Sterne in mind, diluted to nineteenth century taste:

> But my Dear Sir, as you were pleased to select February, why did you not postpone & celebrate the 22nd? Did your watch run ahead of time? Or did the natural impetuosity of the youth cause him to make this untimely exit into the world? Am delighted to hear that instead of putting on childish airs he is already whistling national ones. Give him timely cautions. Read to him the sad history of Phaeton the illustrious 'Son of the Sun' who ran such a mad career & met with such an untimely end.

Chapter VI. Attitude toward Slavery

Nathaniel Watkins' share of Oldham was of course insufficient for him to lay down the cold cash to purchase Brookland in Granville County with its 1200 acres. His start in life was the typical pattern for a new generation in these families. Part of the purchase price he paid, part his father-in-law contributed, the rest ($4000) he borrowed from Susan Watkins Redd's brother-in-law, Frank Redd. James Daniel also gave as a dower to Nancy Watkins in 1859 (the deed is preserved) five slaves: Irving, Grandison, John, Polly, and Sarah. Irving, Grandison, and Polly were especial favorites in the family; they play an intimate role in life at Brookland during and after the War. And in the late seventies there are some moving and pathetic letters from Polly and her children, who had gone out to west Tennessee during hard times and were stranded there.

Just how many Watkins slaves fell to Nathaniel is not clear. There is a deed for Richard's share; in 1851 Mildred Watkins turned over to him Lucy and her four children, Beverly, Shadrack, Anderson, and Lewis—valued, as required, by an impartial committee at $1100. In 1863 Nathaniel was to pay his father-in-law $3000 for another Lucy and her two children, Richard and Daphne; but it is a question whether values had increased so much in twelve years, since Nathaniel paid

in Confederate money, which had just begun to depreciate seriously. Nathaniel probably received the same share as his brother. At any rate, he started his independent married life with a farm of 1200 acres and twelve to fourteen Negroes--all he ever owned, for he hired other "hands" as he needed them, mainly from his father-in-law. In the normal course of events Nathaniel would probably have built up an estate of 1500-2000 acres (his plans for land purchases are among his meticulous farm notes) and, by purchase and natural increase, twenty to thirty Negroes. This had become almost the standard farming unit in southside Virginia and North Carolina. Large numbers of Negroes were no longer profitable in the Piedmont. The great demand for labor now was of course in the cotton country to the west and south. Pertinent here is a letter to Richard from a Missouri cousin, Claiborne Anderson Watkins, who, along with old Charles Read, is the family's most talented misspeller:

> Richmond, Ray County, Mo. Feb. 20 '59.
>
> There is a great accitement in this state at present, it seems that almost every person that can leave is fixing for California or Origon. Cattle, Mules and Oxen are higher than I ever knew them. The Emigration to California & Origon will be nearly if not fully equal to that of 1850 when so many perished on the way. Some of our most wealthy and best citizens are selling their farms, negroes and everything to move to Origon. As to myself this is just as good a country as I wish to live in and I think I shall spend the balance of my days in Old Ray. . . .
>
> At what price can likely young negroe boys from 12 to 20 years be bought at in Virginia. What can girls from fifteen to twenty be bought at.
>
> I would like to buy three or four negroes for my own use and they are so high here at present that it may be to my advantage to go to Virginia. Negroe men hire by the year from 125 dollars to 185—women from 60 to 85 dollars and at the present prices of produce and stock they are profitable at those prices.
>
> Rather than divide the tract of land [which he still owns in Prince Edward] make me a proposition to give or take or trade it off for a young negroe and I will take the negroe at market price in Va. . . .

But Richard did not make him a proposition, for these particular families (so far as these letters show) did not sell or deed Negroes outside their own group--except, as we shall see, in one case of extreme insubordination during the War.

There is in this correspondence an unfortunate gap for the years 1860 and 1861—a critical period which must have provoked sharp expression of opinions on slavery and secession that would be illuminating. But it is fully as significant that in the vast body of letters

for the war period (125 single-spaced typewritten pages for 1862 alone) there is never any discussion whatever of the ethics of slavery. In all the painful heart-searching of Nathaniel and Nancy there is no questioning the rights of wrongs of slavery; it is merely accepted. These two and Richard frequently speak of the fight for independence exactly in the spirit of their grandfathers in 1776, but it seems never to have occurred to them in their fight for liberty from the Union to consider freedom for the Negro. Consequently, some of their most eloquent paragraphs ring strangely hollow to our ears. As is already clear, these people not only professed but lived by Christian principles. Nathaniel pours out self-tormenting pages on his fear that he loves his wife too much, better than God. He and his wife probe for all taints of materialism and selfishness in themselves and their people to explain this visitation of Divine Wrath. Their over-scrupulosity is often wearisome, however touching. But if they never attempt to square slavery with Christian principles, they also never make the slightest effort to justify or defend it. They all merely wanted the North to leave them alone, to let them go in peace; they wasted no time dreaming of joining Mexico in a Caribbean Empire.

The effect of this strange conspiracy of silence among people otherwise so outspoken is like a trauma. Quite probably they never speak of the moral issue because they never faced it themselves, simply put it out of their minds, just as they avoided the very words "slavery" and "slave." And so to some of their outbursts on liberty there is an overtone of irony to which they were deaf, just as Nathaniel was unaware, in writing of the use of Negro troops toward the end of the war, that his comments are ambivalent:

> Jan. 18-1865—If necessary, & if Gen'l. Lee thinks proper, give him an army of negroes—give him anything, everything rather than despond & be conquered. . . . I don't believe much in negro soldiers, but am willing to try the experiment, to try everything honorable & right rather than be subjugated; and as we are fighting as much for the negroes as for ourselves—I mean their welfare—I can't see that there would be anything wrong in their taking a hand and doing some of the fighting.

His sudden interpolation, I mean their welfare, shows at least partial recognition that there is another point of view from his unquestionably sincere conviction that southerners, not the emancipators, have the Negro's true welfare at heart. He returns to the subject a month later:

> [The Negroes] ought to have been brought in three months ago & organized & disciplined, and by now they would have been good soldiers. The only way they can be made effective at this late day is by filling up white companies with negro soldiers. It might be

> easily done in such a way as to relieve the whites of much fatigue duty, & in such a manner as not to offend the delicate scented gentlemanly soldiers who pretend they are too good to fight in company with negroes.

This fine scorn of the "delicate scented gentlemanly soldiers" is a little marred by unconscious snobbery when he continues:

> By the way, nearly all of this class are from those who have never owned a negro, & many of whom are not as respectable as decent negroes.

Of course by the late fifties bitter recriminations on both sides had forced most southerners into a dogged stiff-neckedness. We have to go back ten or twelve years to find a less troubled picture. The earliest explicit indication of an attitude toward slavery in these letters preserved at William and Mary is 1847. But before coming to that we can glance at slavery in Prince Edward County through the New England eyes of Emily Howe, who came down from Princeton, Massachusetts, to teach in the home of a Methodist minister, Mr. Dance.*

She arrived in the early summer of 1836, and in August of that year writes her first impressions of a neighboring household:

> To give you some idea of what good people they are, I will describe them. The white family consists only of Mr. Jackson and wife and a niece whom they have adopted, they are rich, have thirty or forty black people, who are not treated much like slaves I can assure you, they are well fed and clothed, not tasked hard at all, have a good deal of time given them to cultivate corn and tobacco for themselves, and allowed to go to meeting every Sabbath if they choose, and the women generally ride. The little negro children come into the house every day to ask their mistress for biscuit and butter which is never denied them, and some of the house servants are taught to read. I really don't suppose one of them would accept of freedom if it was offered them.

Four months later she picks up this subject again, this time in reference to the Dance household in which she was then living and teaching:

> My views of slavery have altered somewhat since living amongst them. Their condition is in many respects better than I expected, and if slavery existed every where as in Mr. Dance's family and in others I know, it would not be so much of a curse as many people imagine. The slaves are not at all afraid of being sold in this

*I am indebted to Miss Mary Dupuy for these quotations from her great-grandmother's correspondence.

family, as it is against the rules of the Methodist church to buy and sell them, and they are well fed and clothed, and don't work hard at all, go to meetings when they choose and most of the older ones profess religion, and some at least really profess it I think.

This New England emphasis on the religious life of the slaves she discovers is fully shared by most of the southside Virginia owners.

Less than two years after her arrival in Virginia, Emily Howe married a neighboring bachelor some years her senior, Colonel Asa Dupuy of Linden, thus becoming herself a mistress of slaves.* But the passages which I have just quoted, written before she was personally involved, show that she is not an apologist but a factual reporter when she writes to her mother about her new husband, March 20, 1838:

I know you would be surprised to see what privileges his servants have, accustomed as you all are to view slavery in such an odious light. We have several men who can read and one named Aaron, a blacksmith, who can not only read but write also, and who reads and prays regularly in his family. His wife is my cook and is a most excellent woman. She don't work as hard as you used to, and has as many privileges as she wants. She has a daughter living in Lynchburg and when she wants to visit her, she asks her Master for a horse and boy to go with her, stays a week or two and comes back as contented as possible.

Ten or twelve of our grown servants are pious and prayer meetings are held regularly at some of their houses.

We have one or two old women who do nothing but knit a little when they choose and I regularly send to them every morning from our own table coffee, biscuit, etc. If any are sick and want any little delicacy they send for it and it is always given them.

The people of the North think that slaves are sold just at the will of the Master, without any respect to their wishes, but this is not the case generally. When a gentleman has more than he can support he asks the negro who he will choose for a master, and he, the negro, tells him and the man buys him perhaps, and if not he is allowed to choose again.

A good many people here think that slavery is permitted of God for very wise purposes. A great many have been sent and probably many more will be to Africa and the Gospel has been carried with them and in that way it may become generally disseminated throughout that dark region.

*A sketch of this interesting woman, her family, and the life at Linden, has been done by Carrol F. Adams (1954): A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia—a study of Emily Howe; Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

Emily Howe's high, uncompromising moral code was evident throughout her life. The picture which she gives of these three households "and others" in Prince Edward is unquestionably typical of the more enlightened slave-owners, including her neighbors at Oldham, whom she came to know intimately. After her husband's death, Henry N. Watkins was her constant adviser in the management of Linden, riding over on horseback twice a week.

One sad effect of the Abolition movement prior to the Civil War was felt in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. As early as December 12, 1836 Emily Howe writes to her mother that the "Abolition question is an all exciting topic here at the present time and is likely to produce a division between the Northern and Southern churches, as the delegates from each when they meet, think so entirely different upon the subject, that there is not that kindly feeling which ought to exist between brethren, and the southern churches think that to avoid the evil consequences which might result from this want of unanimity and feeling, that they can never fall in with the views of the northern brethren, withdrawal from them seems the only alternative." This prefiguration of secession is especially interesting in Prince Edward, since southside Virginia in general was unmoved by Calhoun's doctrines and drawn by inclination to Henry Clay's.

The sense of union was strong among them naturally, since they had been in the vanguard during the establishment of the United States. The representative of the family in national politics at this time was Henry N's nephew Thomas Watkins Ligon, who had become an adopted Marylander in 1836; but so far as one can judge his views were shared by these Virginians. He was a strong unionist, but he was caught in the dilemma of slavery and newly acquired territory, as we see from his remarks to Congress in 1846:

> In certain portions of this country, slavery, from many causes, not necessary now to particularize, must, for an indefinite period of years, continue to exist. And in attempts to interfere with this order of things, consists the real danger to which the perpetuity of the Union is exposed. Men are too anxious to pull down what they do not like, to allow us to suppose that interference will not be attempted. Another class of men will always be ready to resist those whom they consider impertinent busybodies, meddlers in other men's matters; hence violent collisions between the ultras of the two parties are constantly to be apprehended and to be guarded against.

No more than other southerners could Ligon devise a way of extending southern power to balance northern without extending slavery at the same time. The South had married slavery.

"Let us avoid discord" is also in the back of Henry N. Watkins' mind as he writes to his son Nathaniel a year after Ligon's speech,

in 1847; Nathaniel was a young, impressionable student at Washington College, and his father was worried about radical influences:

> I hope you will not be infected with the (erroneous) Politicks of Dr. Ruffner. The attempt to divide the State of Virginia by the Blue Ridge on the slave question or any other is in my opinion bad Policy. The subject of Slavery is purely Political. Whether the Blacks should be held in slavery or not depends on the fact, whether our condition or theirs would be improved by setting them free.

A somewhat rickety syllogism, but this evidently remained the family's position on slavery, which had become to them a "purely political" question.

Mr. Ballantine, the Yankee son-in-law, had sold his wife's slaves to Richard Watkins and moved to Indiana in 1854; when the Civil War came he was in spirit as well as body on the northern side. But earlier he had been conservative. The lecture room of his church in Washington, as we have seen, was thrown open to Clay and the Colonization enthusiasts; and in a letter consoling Nathaniel on his father's death he adds:

> 1851—The time of disunion seems to be gone by—the agitation at the North is going to be very healthful in its tendency. It will result in the prostration of agitating abolitionism. The South must be relieved by the fact that the Fugitive Law is sustained. It is interesting to see what a power the Ministers have exerted at the North in this matter in correcting public sentiment and defending the authority of law. The pulpit has no such power at the South.

There is a family story that Mr. Ballantine once voiced his disapproval of slavery at Oldham in the presence of his mother-in-law, Mildred Morton Watkins, who had a surprising way of flashing the cinders of her spirit through the ashes of her meekness. She reminded him tartly that when he had wanted to take with him to Washington a little Negro girl she had bought the child from him rather than have her separated so young from her mother.

Implied in the family acceptance of the status quo as expressed by Henry N. is an inability to see any practicable solution devised by man. Futhermore, buried in the back of their minds was a fear of anarchy, which only once finds voice in a letter of Nathaniel's referring to the Negro uprising in Haiti.

So far as personal relationship with the Negroes goes their code was well-defined. In some respects it was a benevolent despotism, with the stress on "benevolent;" in others it was the attitude of parent toward child. There are only two mentions of whipping. Nancy Watkins writes her husband June 22 1863:

One of Tom Carrington's negroes tried to burn his house last night. It was Mr. Baird's William, the very fellow Tom thought so innocent when Pa proved one of the tracks to our smokehouse to be his and would not have him whipped. He ripped off the weather-boarding next to the chimney of Lizzie's chamber and crammed straw in it and set it on fire.

Cruelty and injustice to Negroes were deeply and actively resented by the whole neighborhood. The most criminal case of this kind was a white man's killing a Negro. One of Nathaniel's young sisters-in-law writes to him from Waterloo in 1858:

> Mr. Cane,* who killed Mr. Taylor's negro man, is to be tried in Oxford this week. He came by here Saturday going up there. It was a sad sight to see him sitting up in the wagon with three men sitting with him and a man on horse back. He was bound in chains, and each man was ordered by Gov. Bragg to take a gun and pistol with them. He is to be tried in Oxford and then sent to Raleigh and bound in prison until they decide whether they will hang him or not. . . .

This Mr. Cane was acquitted, but Nancy Watkins always thereafter refers to him bitterly as "that murderer who ought to have been hung."

> July 27—Lemuel Amber's negroes are all the time in the woods. Some time ago they were all out but one, and Goin [negro man] cooks & milks regularly for Rose.
>
> They have a little negro girl about nine years old who stays out most of the time, goes to Mr. Moss' & Mr. Higgins' sometimes perfectly without any clothes on. She is wild looking as a little savage and is dreadfully scarred up.
>
> Friday as Pa was going to the Fork he noticed a track in the road which looked as if it was made by a log dragging from a wagon. Chris Heggy Moss & Pa heard somebody knocking down in the woods and went to see what it was, when they saw this little girl with a block weighing 50 pounds chained around her neck. She had a rock trying to get the chain off, had nearly succeeded. Chris was afraid to take off the block, but Pa said he would take the responsibility and took it off. Her eyes were swollen as if she had been beaten in the face, and the chain was fixed so as to choke her if she tried to drag it off. She was carried home Saturday, and Goin says they locked her up in the crib and had given her nothing to eat Sunday evening. Pa seems to be very much disturbed about it, and all the neighbors are talking about Lemuel's cruel treatment of his negroes.

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*Substituted name.

> August 27—Lemuel Amber came by here Sunday evening with his little runaway girl walking on before him. She has been in the woods three or four months and they thought she was dead. She went to Mr. Moss' Sunday, and he went there and brought her home. He has several out now.

Irving, one of her own Negroes, had just caught another trying to break into Brookland; Nancy's beehives and smokehouse had been pillaged, her carriage horses stolen; she was overwhelmed by the difficulty of trying to manage Brookland during her husband's absence in the army from Waterloo several miles away. But the problem of these Negroes who had taken to the woods was somewhat like our juvenile delinquents today; they were in a sense children from improper homes.

Closer home was the defection of Tommy, one of Nathaniel's Negroes; unfortunately his wife's letter giving the original circumstances is lost, and so what he did is not clear, but Nathaniel's reaction is:

> August 27 1862—I hope your Pa will pursue but one course towards Tommy. If he comes again, catch & tie him, & sell him for what he will bring—or until he can sell him to someone who lives at least a hundred miles off. It is the course I have always intended to pursue towards any of my negroes who should behave as Tommy has. Negroes are now bringing a fine price. Of course it will not do to talk about this until he is caught. Then I wish all of my negroes to understand that this will always be my course.
>
> Sept. 17—I wish Tommy sold, & though very sorry indeed that it is necessary, feel no scruples about it. I don't think as you do, that my being at home would have prevented it—it might have done it—but this does not make it right that he should be kept to have an evil influence on other negroes around him.

Evidently Nancy intercedes or gives further explanations:

> Oct. 1—I was right sorry your Pa did not sell Tommy at $1350—I would have taken $1000 for him, under the circumstances. The knowledge that he is at Home keeps me uneasy all the time. I have lost all faith and confidence in him. There is no telling when he may get into difficulties, or of what kind they may be. Of course, as you all know all the circumstances of his misconduct better than I do, I leave it with you & your Pa about keeping him, but if I were at Home, in circumstances as I now understand them, I would sell him to-morrow for what I could get. He will be another Billy Wilson, if not worse.

Finally, on November 2 the matter is terminated:

> Though I felt very sorry it was necessary, I was greatly relieved when you wrote that your Pa had sold Tommy. If I had been at Home

> & could have had him under myself all the time, I wouldn't have thought of selling, without making every effort to manage & break him. But during such times as these, when he was under the eye of no one but Smiley [overseer], I couldn't think of his being with the other negroes, without feeling that at some time he might get himself, or some of them into serious difficulty of some kind. I felt it a duty to my other negroes.

His forebodings were justified; even after he was sold Tommy somehow made his way back to the Brookland neighborhood. Two years later Grandison threatens to go the way of Tommy:

> March 6, 1865—Grand's behavior troubles me very much—were it not for his family, & the fact that he is so young & probably acting under bad influence I would treat him exactly as I did Tommy—only I would send him so far there would never be a possibility of his ever coming back to the neighborhood.
>
> The best way to manage him is to treat him kindly & positively—and punish him severely. He was always a great favorite with me, & his conduct hurts me mightily. I am afraid Tommy will attempt to carry him off to the Yankees.
>
> I don't think it at all probable that Smiley [overseer] will be able to find out anything about Stephen--I wish your Pa would write & make the necessary inquiries.

Nathaniel's self-esteem is wounded by Grandison's defection; he is deeply hurt that a favored house Negro should betray not just trust but affection.

Two days later good news about Grandison, none about Stephen, who had been requisitioned by the Army to build fortification at Weldon:

> I was very glad to hear that Grandison had come home, and do hope he will now determine to behave himself & get in no more difficulties and give no more trouble. You have no idea how much I have been troubled by his conduct. . . .
>
> I have no doubt that Stephen died from sickness in a hospital, or was captured by the miserable Yankees. I have no idea the negro Smiley saw shot was our Stephen. . . . Please get your Pa, or someone, to attend to this matter immediately. Even if [Stephen] is lost, it would be a comfort for me to know the circumstances.

He adds the final caution (italics mine):

> And hereafter if others of our negroes should be called out, *please do everything & go to any expense to have them well cared for & protected. This is a sacred duty we owe them.*

Tommy was dealt with summarily (he was the only Negro sold outside the family) but with what Nathaniel considered strict and necessary justice—it must be absolutely clear to the individual and the

group that such behavior would not be tolerated. In Grandison's case justice was tempered with mercy and affection—his youth and his family weighed in his favor. And Nathaniel's deep concern about Stephen's mysterious disappearance and caution to his wife show that he looked upon his responsibility for the Negroes' welfare as "a sacred duty." His code is most clearly summed up after Tommy's fate is definitely settled (italics again mine):

> 1862—I wish all of my negroes to understand distinctly that as long as they behave themselves I will consider them as *members of my family, and will part with any & all my property before I would sell a single one*; but *if they make it necessary*, I will not hesitate, & will have no scruple about selling.

From the letters sent by Polly and her children fifteen years later from Tennessee, it is evident that a few had been taught to write (Emily Howe's early letters confirm this practice); the handwriting and style show that some were written at dictation by white friends. "As members of my family," Nathaniel oversaw their spiritual education as he did that of his own children; frequently he reminds his wife, if the Negroes can not always get to church, to have Mr. Hines come and preach to them. During the many revivals in the course of the War Nancy always writes with pride and pleasure the names of the Negroes who have joined the church; and in those days, unlike the present,* it never occurred to anyone that Negroes and whites should not belong to the same church:

> Catherine [Negro] is not so well today but nothing serious—except she walked too much Sunday. Pa sent all of the servants who wished to go every day while the [revival] meeting was on. Several of them were among the anxious: Liz, Celia, Reuben, Uncles Big Billy, and Tom, & *my Eliza*.
>
> The negroes all look *fat and* well, showing that they get plenty to eat and are not *overworked*. . . .
>
> The negroes *are shouting* and seem to be very happy. Jennie [Negro] has professed religion--poor thing, I have thought a great deal about her since she has been in bad health, and I hope now if she should never recover she will be prepared for another world.

Their health was of course a constant responsibility and source of anxiety. Like the household, they came down with diphtheria, typhoid, whooping cough, measles, dysentery; and Nathaniel, anxious "to have everything *right*," sends special instructions about always promptly paying *Doctor* Wilson, who had charge of them, "since I understand he keeps no accounts." During the outbreak of measles at Oldham in

*After the Civil War the Negroes themselves wanted churches of their own.

1858 he himself did much of the nursing:

> I am sitting up to-night rather later than usual in order that I may go around and watch the sick. . . . All are getting on as well as could be expected, except Tom [Negro], who has pneumonia, and is in a very critical condition. Dr. Eggleston is attending him, but such cases rarely recover. Another set, the children, are breaking out to-day. . . . Lucy [Negro] is again very low—don't think she can last long, the warm weather seems to enfeeble her so much.

A few years later his sister Susan gives a similar account, thirty-six cases of whooping cough at Shenstone in Prince Edward, thirty-one of them Negroes; on another occasion there were forty-two cases of measles at Shenstone.

A dreadful ambiguity in such situations occurs at once to us: humane treatment in saving a human life was simultaneously saving one's valuable property, for the human being represented an investment of several hundred dollars. Of course we must remember other nineteenth century ambiguities: a beloved wife was in the eyes of the law at the same time virtually a chattel. All that one can say positively from these letters is that on no occasion of illness or death—and there are dozens of instances recounted in detail--is there ever once the slightest suggestion of financial interest or loss. Never is there a hint of "Sarah died today, there goes $900." They would have been fools not to realize the practical advantages of good medical care; but they speak about sick Negroes with the same concern as if they were members of the family; indeed, since it was the custom to bring extremely sick Negro women into the main house, no one not in the know would be able to distinguish these Catherines, Jennies, Lucys, Sarahs, Aunt Betseys from relatives. And the really telling point is the solicitude for the old and infirm kept about the house; from them no further labor could be expected, while food and clothing and doctors' bills went on. This treatment will appear casually from time to time in the following chapters; here is one striking instance in a letter of Nathaniel's:

> 1862—My joy at receiving letters from you has been much saddened by the intelligence of Sarah's death [Negro]. It is sad to feel that death has entered our little family, but our kind heavenly Father knows best what is for our good, and though trials and afflictions do seem very hard at times, yet it is always a comfort to know that we are in His hands. . . .

Messages from Negroes in one household were always relayed to their kin or friends in another:

> Aunt Betsey asks very often if Henry [Negro cook for Nathaniel and five cousins in the Army] has sent her any message. She says

> you must tell him that his sister Virginia & his brother Ruffin have made a profession of religion.

And time after time Nathaniel, writing home from the front:

> Much love to all. . . . Write how everything is coming on at home--my oats, wheat, clover lot & orchard. Always give my love to the negroes.
>
> Give my love to all—and especially to the negroes—tell them to try and do what they know to be right and they will certainly get on well.

And so they followed Henry N. Watkins' advice in 1847 "by letting things remain in statu quo, for future developments of Providence." When those developments were past instead of future, when it was all over, the Negroes at last emancipated, Richard spoke for most of them: "'Poor free dis' without money, without clothes & without a home [he had just sold Oldham to pay debts], but better than slavery."

But how they felt in 1860 and 1861 probably no one will ever know. The single letter--from Patty to Nathaniel and Nancy November 9 1860--is packed with the stupendous details of three neighborhood marriages in one day. Buried in all the minutiae are these two sentences:

> Great excitement about the election everywhere. The men talk about nothing else.

It was a fateful election for them; the new President they were in the next few years frequently to call "tyrant"—but long afterward, at least in Nathaniel's case, they changed their minds. Despite a residual bitterness, Nathaniel before he died in 1889 brought up his children to respect and admire Abraham Lincoln, within reason.

PART TWO: WAR

Chapter I. Retreat from Yorktown; Battle of Seven Pines: Boredom in the Reserves; Substitutes; Winter Quarters; Illness and Death at Home; Chancellorsville; Death of Stonewall Jackson. March 1862–May 1863

Nathaniel did not rush off to war at the first bugle call in the spring of 1861, and when he volunteered for the army a year later it was clearly from a deep sense of duty rather than enthusiasm. He was thirty-two years old, married five years, with a wife and two children. He had made a very promising start as a farmer, but in acquiring

Brookland he had incurred heavy debts. He is by no means alone in his difficult adjustment to army life. No sooner is he in the war than it becomes apparent how much he hates it. Especially during the long, idle months of "phony war" in redoubts near Richmond, unable to get leave to visit his family only a day's ride away, obsessed at times by the fear that his farm is going to pieces, that his wife's illness is going to be fatal, he frankly yearns to get a substitute, struggles with his highly developed conscience. His experiences are a pattern repeated endlessly in the recent World War, and show why the Army learned to prefer young, unmarried men under twenty-five to men in their early thirties with strong home ties. Yet Nathaniel remained a soldier to the bitter end; he was among Lee's troops at Appomattox Courthouse.

Like all his family he is highly emotional. Though it is a simplification, these letters will be best understood if one bears in mind that he has four ruling passions: 1) Religious faith and a strict moral code; 2) devotion to his wife above all, his children, family, neighbors ("how I lived & loved, as a man lives and breathes, scarcely conscious of it, so much had it become a part & necessary condition of my very existence;" "Aunt Nancy's caution about forgetting my children was as telling a man to forget to breathe"); 3) concern for his own farm and farming; 4) love of reading—moral writings, literature, "natural philosophy." As a southerner he merely wanted to be left alone, to live his own quiet life in his own way.

His whole attitude toward the war is most simply and clearly expressed August 7, 1862:

> My desire is simply to do my duty—with no aspirations for military fame or promotion, and to get back as quickly as possible to those I love so much.

and the intensity of his dislike two weeks later:

> One of my Lieuts. asked me yesterday what was my age; I told him, and then told him that I would never count this as one of the years of my life—should I live ever so long, it shall be a blank to me; for I am separated from all (in this world) that I live for, & that makes life worth having.

This does not mean that he is immune to the stirring victories which came rapidly at the beginning. In September he writes:

> While I feel sometimes as if I should like to be connected with the army which is achieving such glorious victories around Washington, I am thankful, Darling, that I am left so near you.

Even in the exultation of victory he is almost never vindictive:

> August 14 1862—But they can never feel it as we have. . . . And the war has been carried on on our own soil entirely. No one can

begin to conceive of the horrors & devastation of war, until they have seen the country which has been passed over by two large, hostile armies.

But I would feel perfectly satisfied to have peace now, without attempting to punish them by an invasion of their territory. . . .

The unanswerable question flies back and forth between Nathaniel and his wife (occasionally Richard joins in): "What are your hopes now for peace?"—"When will this cruel, bloody, unnecessary war have end?" But all is not sweetness and light toward their enemies. They were too spirited for that, especially the Daniels, several of whom were thorough rebels. James Beverly Daniel, refusing to admit defeat, virtually ruined himself by continuing to accept Confederate money in full payment to the end. According to a family story, when a straggling soldier brought the first news of Lee's surrender to Granville, James Daniel ordered him arrested as a liar and a deserter. And Nathaniel writes his wife after being in the army six months that he often thinks of her Ma "lying on the bed and abusing the Yankees. I can heartily join her now, and go much farther than she ever did." And when Nathaniel goes down to besieged Charleston she writes in September 1863:

> I suppose this must be the equinoxial rain and I hope it will give the Yankee fleet at Charleston some trouble. If there is danger of the Yankees taking Charleston I hope they will take it in ashes.

Having no military ambition whatever, Nathaniel is not interested in becoming an officer, refusing to enter his name for the customary elections even when encouraged to do so, and for a long time to accept even the post of Ordnance Sergeant when offered him. Also he realizes that he is temperamentally not suited to military command. He makes no bones (at least when writing freely to his wife) about his thankfulness whenever by accident he escapes an action, as he just missed the Battle of Seven Pines in June 1862:

> When I hear our men speak of the horrors of the battlefield after the fight, and saw some of them sprinkled with the blood of those with whom I had been daily associated for two months, I couldn't help feeling thankful that I had been spared from witnessing the sight, & been providentially kept out of it.

And as late as March 1865:

> When I reached here the first man I met was Blucher Dick [Watkins]. In telling of the last fight on our right, in which his battery bore a most important & conspicuous part, & was very much exposed,--I asked him if he didn't fear the minies. He replied that he & I ought to be too good presbyterians, from our raising, to fear anything in this world. I felt the reproof. I have too many sweet, strong ties to this world.

But there was an even deeper reason for Nathaniel's dread of going into battle. He had been through enough full-dress rehearsals to understand the excitement and stimulation of gunfire and charges:

> July 29 1862—It approached nearer a battle than anything I had seen, & I was astonished to find what effect it had on me. I can't think that many men (even cowards) go into a fight, after the first scare, with much concern about their safety. There is an unnatural excitement which makes men reckless & regardless of danger.

He knew he could face fire, but he knew, too, that for all his innate gentleness and abhorrence of bloodshed, he was subject to sudden ungovernable explosions of anger, as in this illuminating incident, August 13 1862:

> Yesterday a batch of 140 Yankee officers, from Genls. down to Lieuts., came by here on their way down to be exchanged. I went out to have a close look at them. They were generally fine looking men, in nice deep blue uniform—were all perfectly silent & looked downcast.
>
> I took my place in front of the line, & would catch the eyes of the highest officers as they passed & look the rascals out of countenance. I didn't see one that could look me full in the face. You have no idea, Darling, how it affected me. It made my blood boil with anger. I could scarcely keep myself from picking up the rocks that were lying around me & hurling them at their heads.
>
> I can now understand the feeling which forces our men sometimes to refuse quarter in battle. I have always thought that I could never be induced to murder a man who had surrendered in battle, but now I fear that such might be the case should I have an opportunity. I pray that I may never have it.

Our men gave them no insult, but looked on in perfect silence. A true descendant of the belligerent Quaker, Henry of Henrico. And Nathaniel's own grandfather, Colonel Thomas Watkins, revealed on his deathbed in 1797 something which he had till then kept secret, and which had caused him much anguish. "He stated that in a furious charge at Guilford, in a personal encounter with a British officer, the latter asked for 'quarter,' but, in his impetuosity, the Colonel stated that he killed his adversary."

And so during his first year of adjustment to army life there are times when Nancy Watkins cajoles and argues with her husband not to get a substitute; then their positions are reversed. Especially after their only boy dies and her husband is sent off for six weeks to Charleston, she begins to plead with him to arrange long furloughs, to quit the army for a year. But he refuses, and during the final stages he throws himself body and soul into the cause of the Confederacy,

filled with despair at the disintegration around him, the money fever of profiteers, the rising chorus of "croakers."

For Nathaniel and his wife these war years were a profound moral experience, even though they were not converted to emancipation. Deeply as they both very naturally resented the invasion and devastation of the South, they regarded the war as ultimately God's punishment on them and their people for selfishness and sins of which they were only dimly aware. After he has been in the army only six weeks Nathaniel writes:

> Dear, I am afraid I love you and our little ones too much—that my heart is too much set on you. This I know, that if it were not for you I would not regard my life at all in this war. My only desire is to live to see you again & be with you once more, at any sacrifice of property or limbs.
>
> I feel that I have appreciated our happiness too little, & I know that this war will make me a wiser and a better man.

If they are only spared, he says, he could "sacrifice everything but honor;" he could live happily in a cabin and "labour as a negro for your support." And Nancy:

> 1863—I would not give this privilege (of having you where I can hear from you) for the highest office in the army—If you do your part in this war and come home safe I would be satisfied with anything. If I still have you my dearest treasure and our little Minnie we cannot wish for more. If the Yankees take all of our property—we can still be happy together. I could be happy anywhere with you Darling.

Thinking of sins of omission, she goes on to speak of opportunities for unselfishness which they have neglected. And this is not with either of them what we today would call "fox-hole morality." These constant resolutions, which sometimes make tedious reading, they remember after peace comes and put into effect.

"Can we ever," asks Nathaniel six weeks before Appomattox, "be as happy again as we were then? Yes, yes. Not as light-hearted maybe, but more deeply, purely happy than ever before. . . ."

After spending the winter of 1861-1862 thoroughly training his raw recruits outside Washington in preparation for his Peninsular campaign, McClellan landed his army at the mouth of the James and in April 1862 started toward Yorktown. A few weeks before, Nathaniel Watkins on his way to the front had found the trains "all occupied carrying troops towards Petersburg—for the Peninsula, I think:"

> It is reported here that they are fighting near Newport News, but it is only a rumor—No one seems to know anything—no daily papers from Richmond.

He reached Gloucester Point on April 2nd, and began his army career light-heartedly (and a little snobbishly), setting up housekeeping with considerable impedimenta:

> Everything safe except our box which we were compelled to leave in Richmond. . . . They had built us a roomy & very comfortable house. I bought in Richmond a cooking stove & all necessary kitchen & Household furniture, which will be sent on this week. We will build our kitchen to-day, or to-morrow.
>
> Our company has in it a good many very nice fellows, wealthy men of the first families, and I like it much better than when I first came down. There is a fine prospect for a fight on the Peninsula, and I think we may have a little about Yorktown, but Magruder has been reinforced so rapidly, and the fortifications at this place & Yorktown strengthened so much, I think we can repulse them with ease. . . .
>
> Our officers are all good pious men, more moral than most companies so far as I can see—hear less profanity in our camp than anywhere I have been. They are all Baptists, & say there is no other denomination in their country. Of course we have no drinking, as Martial law extends over the whole place.
>
> If Mr. Booker comes down please send by him if he can bring them conveniently, two or three more white shirts and a small pillow. . . .

For this private the War begins in faintly sybaritic fashion, almost like a social gathering, with all comforts of home. He and four younger cousins (Abe Daniel, Sam Graham, John and Daniel Booker) who had volunteered with him brought along a negro, Henry, to cook for and wait on them. He finds the shells of the Yankee vessels bursting over the river "a beautiful sight;" the men "are determined to conquer or die." Not suspecting the forced marching ahead of him a month later, he is rather smugly pleased with his adjustment:

> A soldier's life isn't so rough if a man takes it cheerfully & resolutely.
>
> A great many of my company have crossed the river to have a shot at the skirmishers, but I think this amateur fighting, though well enough for a single man, doesn't suit a man with a wife & children. I am willing enough, I hope, to fight when duty calls, but am not fond enough of it to go combing after one. . . .
>
> Give my love to all of the negroes at Home (& at your Pa's). I was as sorry as they that I didn't go by to see them. . . . Our servant Henry suits first rate—tell your Pa to make some arrangements with Mr. Booker about his hire. I forgot it when I left.

This first really modern warfare sounds small-scale and a little archaic, yet strangely contemporary too. Nathaniel has the newly

arrived civilian soldier's curiosity and sense of novelty:

> They have thrown several shells entirely over us, and some of our men have succeeded in digging up three, which failed to explode. They are ugly looking things, I can assure you—about 20 inches in length, tapering at the end where the cap is, like an acorn, and weighing one hundred pounds. We first see the smoke from the gun, then in about 30 seconds hear the report, and then listen for the peculiar whizzing of the shell, and if near drop down behind our breastworks or into a bomb-proof if one is convenient. Unless they come rapidly we can always dodge them. It is a beautiful sight, and has afforded us considerable amusement to-day.
>
> Just as I finished this sentence one of the old things came whizzing almost over our house, which is meant, I suppose, to disturb our slumbers. It seems to amuse Henry [negro] very much—at first he was frightened and was very anxious for Daniel to go home: but now he spends all his spare time watching out for them. There comes another.

One evening he was too tired to finish his letter:

> Had been spading sand the day before and a part of yesterday. Your letter about serving my country conscientiously came in good time, and I thought frequently while working about it. I wondered if you would have given the same advice had you seen me with coat off throwing dirt for life. It certainly had the effect of gaining about 1/2 hours work for the Confederacy. . . .

Nathaniel had a healthy ability to laugh at himself and even, as here where the extravagance of her patriotism is involved, at the wife whom he worshiped.

> Will give you our bill of fare for the day. For breakfast—coffee, nice biscuit, batter-bread, fried meat and gravy;—for dinner—cornbread, beef, fried meat, eggs scrambled, and raw oysters (first rate)—supper, same as breakfast, with stewed oysters. . . .
>
> I went out last night about 3 o'clock and stood on our batteries & looked over the whole Peninsula—it was a bright, beautiful, mild moonlight night. Only one little light was to be seen anywhere. Everything was as still and quiet and peaceful as I have ever seen it at home. I couldn't realize that there were over two hundred thousand men, lying there within a half-mile of each other, prepared to engage at any moment in deadly conflict. . . .

He misses the green of spring—"Gloucester point is just one huge bank of sand"—and steals off at every opportunity "to enjoy the silence, fresh air, and sweetness of the budding forest, and green fields."

Like any civilian soldier, he finds the noise, the lack of women,

the lack of privacy almost intolerable:

> What annoys me as much as anything else is the constant noise, and bustle and confusion—it is impossible to find a still quiet place and be alone for five minutes. We very rarely see any ladies. A few days since I saw a carriage standing near our tents, with four beautiful girls in it—I couldn't resist the temptations to go and take a look at them--to stare them in the face and feel that I was doing nothing improper [the Victorian equivalent of the wolf-call].
>
> Give love to the negroes & tell them to try and keep everything straight & to behave themselves well towards everybody, and not to run about too much—I feel great anxiety about them, and am sorry I didn't see them before I left. . . .
>
> One shell passed directly over my head, and though I knew I was safe, couldn't help feeling a little singular. It exploded and Sam went and has just brought in some of the pieces. They sent some eight or ten near me while standing on my post, but I would dart into the bomb-proof when I heard them coming, like a spider in his hole, and finally became so much amused that I couldn't help busting out into a laugh, though by myself.

He was finding the army broadening, too:

> There is a Mr. Ryland staying in our camp, who has been engaged for some time distributing tracts among the soldiers & holding prayer meetings in the tents—he is a remarkably nice, clever young man—is a Baptist minister. . . . I shall always hereafter respect & love the Baptists. I see nothing of their ignorance & bigotry here—no one could tell but that they were Presbyterians—their hymns, prayers, remarks & manner of conducting their meetings are all ours.
>
> We had a sermon yesterday from Mr. Stuart, the Episcopal minister who was dragged out of his pulpit in Alexandria for refusing to pray for the President of the U.S. . . .

And then on May 3rd a hasty note that they are evacuating their positions:

> I have thought for a long time that our true policy was to fall back from the water courses & compel the Enemy to fight us on land. I may have to rough it a little more . . . but I feel as safe in one place as another. Am in the protection of the same God wherever I go.

When McClellan attacked on May 6th he found that the Confederates had quietly slipped away, abandoning Yorktown. Greatly retarded by rain and execrable roads, he moved toward the Chickahominy River. And for the first time Nathaniel, among the troops retreating through those swamps to Richmond, found what army life is really like. No

more "kitchen furniture" from Richmond, no more white shirts and little pillows.

Mangohick Church, May 8 1862.

We reached this place yesterday evening, after a forced march of 100 miles from Glost. Point. . . . We left the Point Saturday night at 8 o'clock and marched 40 miles by 8 o'clock Sunday evening (with a rest of 4 hours Sunday morning) over roads some of the way as bad as our Granville roads sometimes get.

Our boys (though it was their first march) have stood it like veterans—haven't murmured—haven't lagged behind,—and are in finer spirits today than they have been during the march—anxious to go on. . . .

Sunday was a close, cold, rainy day, & Sunday night we camped out with no tents. We made places like your Pa makes for his hogs & I had a most delightful night's rest. . . . Haven't been in a house since we commenced marching, until last night, when several of us slept in an old Granary (in which a flock of pigeons had been roosting for a long time), would have preferred the woods.

For three days I had nothing to eat but biscuit, but when we got into King & Queen the people brought good things out to every gate & cross road through the county. I never saw such hospitality in my life—& followed us & talked with us & cheered us on—and this too when we were not coming to defend them, but were leaving them behind to the mercies of the miserable, brutal Yankee soldiers.

I can tell you nothing about the army or the plans of our officers, for the simple reason that I know nothing more of them than old Theodore [James Daniel's negro weaver] does.

May was filled with feverish preparations to meet McClellan's expected onslaught at the gates of Richmond, for which the Chickahominy swamps were like a moat to a medieval army. The rain was torrential. For the Confederate troops it was a time of confusion, hardship, constant drilling, disturbing rumors, shifting camps:

May 20--Camp 1 1/2 miles from Richmond--We are so closely confined in the limits of camp that it is now impossible for us to see anything, or hear anything. Tis true that we are now so near R.mond that we get very often the daily papers, but since being in the army, I am less disposed than ever to credit anything I see in them. We have some two or three men in our company whose daily business is to make up some exciting piece of news which is circulated from mouth to mouth, just as an uncertain report would be in Granville—no one believing it and all repeating it because they have nothing else to tell.

It is likely that the army will remain here for a time unless attacked by the enemy, as we cannot fall back any farther without giving up R.mond, which I am persuaded our authorities will not

[illegible]

do without a desperate struggle. . . .

May 27—Camp 6 miles from Richmond—To give you some idea of how things are managed I will tell you how our Brigade has spent the last few days.

Saturday in the rain we were ordered to keep in readiness to march at a moment's notice. We buckled on our accoutrements & were drawn out in line & remained under arms an hour & a half in a hard rain—were then dismissed & ordered to dry out & cook three days rations.

Sunday we were again drawn out & marched some four miles down the road, then rested & drawn out in line of battle through the woods, then carried back about a mile & rested again, then marched down the road again, then up to where we now are, & then in a line of battle across the woods again & ordered to be ready at a moment's notice—after a short time we were called out & advised to go to sleep early as we would have to march tomorrow (this) morning at light.

This morning it was raining hard, yet they waked us up at 3 o'clock & drew us out in line as if to march. Were kept standing for two or three hours & then marched down the road a mile through the mud—then ordered back to our present place—which is the outskirts of a large marsh, with woods & water all around & about us.

In the mean time we have no tents—but manage to sleep dry & warm by such devices & inventions as we never dreamt of before. Our boys have so far kept well & stood it well, and we four who still remain manage by doubling blankets to sleep comfortably every night. I think it is more healthy than in crowded tents.

We are now forced to do our own cooking, as we left Henry [negro] in the old camp to take care of our things. . . .

Give my love to all—and especially to the negroes—tell them to try and do what they know to be right and they will certainly get on well. . . .

Finally, when McClellan's expected attack failed to materialize, General Johnston decided to take the initiative himself at rain-swollen Chickahominy Creek May 31st. Thus began the battles of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks. By a fluke—he was in Richmond for a few days with an attack of kidney stones—Nathaniel missed the actual fighting:

June 2—We have just received positive intelligence that all our boys are safe. . . . Sam & Abe were in [the battle] but were not hurt. . . . Mr. Howison & I heard yesterday that our Battalion was in the fight & got in an ambulance to look for the boys. We got separated but I found the boys in our old camp near Rmond—they were all three in the fight. Our Artillery boys distinguished themselves, & took a fine Yankee battery—our company lost 5 killed &

23 wounded (only 6 or 7 mortally)--28 in all. They entered the fight with 58—nearly 1/2 killed & wounded. . . . Daniel Booker had the top of his cap split by a ball. . . .

June 7—The fight was across a swamp, & our men charged fighting for an hour, in water sometimes waist deep. It was a desperate fight, our killed & wounded cannot, I think, be less than 3800. The Yankee loss is said to be much greater, but we have no means of ascertaining accurately what it was.

Our men have been withdrawn and the enemy now occupy the same entrenchments from which they were driven--and I don't know any great advantages that we gained, except their commissary & tents, and 500 prisoners & some artillery.

They were magnificently armed & equipped—had nice tents, barrels of oranges, lemons, ground coffee, whiskey, &c.—their haversacks, knapsacks, canteens, cooking utensils, uniforms, and all the furniture of a soldier were such as I have never seen in our army. Our men got a good many things—I drank some fine Yankee coffee this morning which Sam Graham put in his haversack as he passed through their tents.

I know nothing of any of the plans of our generals or of the Yankees, and very little of the lines which we are now occupying. . .

Nancy Watkins concludes a letter on June 12th:

Tell the boys to make haste & whip the Yankees home, we want to have them back again. I think of you every minute in the day—and long for happiness & peace once more. I cannot believe God will suffer our heartless enemies to persecute us much longer. . . .

The time is coming, and it may be very soon, when we shall be a free and happy people and when our loved ones will be restored to us again. May God in his infinite mercy hasten that happy time. Oh darling if I could only tell you how much I love you—better than life, country, or anything else. I cannot enjoy anything unless shared with you. It is dark. Goodbye my precious one. May God protect you.

She was disturbed by the tone of his letters and not even sure whether he was still in artillery or transferred to infantry. And indeed he had been shifted back and forth from one to the other, from one camp to another, mainly along the edge of the swamps southeast of Richmond.

Nathaniel did not like any of this at all. It was not merely the rude contrast with eating oysters and laughingly dodging shells at Yorktown; he had been sick for weeks with dysentery and had already caught the malaria which he never got rid of till he died. Actually things were looking up a little; he had just written her on the 11th that he had been transferred to Col. Thomas Goode's Regiment [he was brother of a neighbor in Granville, which was to prove useful]. It was infantry, which he found much harder than artillery, but at least they

were taken out of the Chickahominy swamps and moved to the dry bluffs of the James River. He remarks with sympathetic but caustic humor:

> Mr. Booker spent the last night in our tent. He said he wanted to see how the Soldiers fared, & spoke about substituting himself for Daniel if Daniel was a little unwell, but after a night's trial he seemed perfectly satisfied,--in fact, a little subdued, and went back next morning through a hard rain, with no disposition ever again to try a soldier's life. . . .

Now he answers his wife's queries as to why he has been "low-spirited:"

> June 19—I have been very much disturbed about the condition of our company. As long as we were unorganized, we suffered for proper commissary, quarter-master & medical attention. . . . A great many sick men, and had no surgeon or medicine, or ambulance—this caused great suffering.
>
> Our officers were too ignorant, or too self-indulgent & selfish to do anything for their men. We are dependent on them now as regards such attentions. This about our officers though harsh is true, and I wish you to say nothing about it to anyone. I didn't write it to anyone but you. . . . Yet . . . Gen. Wise & Col. Goode are both very kind to their men & attentive to their health & wants. Our surgeon, Dr. Mason, seems to be a gentleman, a good, kind man, and a good physician—and very attentive to cleanliness about the camp.
>
> Our duties are comparatively light, and our discipline strict. I like this too—it always makes the men happier, though they complain at first. I am as happy and contented as I can be in the army. I generally manage to keep in pretty good spirits. . . .
>
> I like this retired place—I went down in the deep oak woods a few days since about day,—it was a beautiful morning—& hundreds of birds were singing—the first birds I have heard since leaving Gloucester Point. I felt for a long time as if I were at home. . . .

Quite evidently the main troubles were homesickness and boredom from enforced idleness:

> I can't understand why there is not more fighting—it seems the unanimous wish of the army to fight it out & go home, & yet we are kept ditching & doing nothing, while hundreds of soldiers are dying every week from exposure & sickness. . . .
>
> We are throwing up fortifications around Chafin's Bluff, to prevent the possibility of its being taken by land. I am fully convinced that it is utterly impossible for any number of Gun boats to pass the obstructions & forts of Drury's & Chafin's Bluffs—they are undoubtedly the strongest in America & the river is so narrow that

our sharp shooters on the banks can kill the enemy's gunners even with pistols. . . . [He gives often elaborate descriptions of fortifications around Richmond.]

If the war lasts long, I will have no use for Jim Howell, or Billy Pettiford, when I come home, but with Sam Graham can do all of your Pa's & my ditching, besides occasional jobs in the neighborhood. It goes mighty hard with Doc. He throws a very little dirt on his spade, stops, scratches his head, makes a dry remark, hurries up his next neighbor & declares he does more than anyone in the company.

I see such immense & such fine clover lots on the fine James River farms that I wish more than ever to get it over my whole farm. The clover around Richmond has saved our army. Without it we couldn't have half fed our horses & mules. . . .

There was a battle within hearing all the final week of June, but his company was held in reserve (he is properly thankful). He hopes that McClellan's army will be entirely demoralized "and that this would be the last blood shed," but

I am beginning to fear that though McClellan has been driven back with heavy losses, his retreat has been so skillfully conducted & protected by his gunboats, he still presents a formidable front, & his army is less broken to pieces & demoralized than we at first supposed. . . .

I looke for [peace] through foreign intervention, as I see yet no evidence of backing down in the North, & no disposition to end this cruel & bloody war. Of course we have to leave all this entirely to the same kind Providence which has watched over us and our affairs during the whole war, and enabled us to withstand the overwhelming numbers & superior outfit of the enemy, much better than many of us expected.

The eight days fighting around Richmond has encouraged our troops very much & undoubtedly demoralized the Yankee troops much more. And now instead of the oft repeated prediction heard through our whole lines constantly, "that McC. would have Richmond in a few days," we hear the same men saying, "that he can't get it & shall not have it."

I have been in the ditch two hours this morning & will be in again for two hours this evening. . . . Ditching & marching & drilling has made my flesh firmer & harder than it ever was, & I am burnt so black I hardly think you would own me. It is also fine exercise for the chest & lungs, and a small army with kind officers is a splendid gymnasium for young men and invalids. . . .

I have always neglected to say that I wish Nelly & the Big Colt worked as little as possible. If Irving [negro] is left alone he will work the Big Colt down before anyone knows it. I want all of my

colts kept fat, & curried occasionally. Make Charley write to me about my little pointer Tasso. . . .

All the "sickliness" was not in the army. Patty Watkins was writing her brother monthly letters all along, telling of Richard's skirmishes (Richard, being in the cavalry, under Stuart, had participated in the daring raids behind the lines), and in July one of the several letters describing the deaths of children, who all during the War succumbed to typhoid or diphtheria—sometimes three in one family at one time.

Patty writes: "Cousin Paulina Puryear lost her baby not long ago, which makes four children she has lost in the course of a year with diphtheria." This kind of news hardly cheered a supersensitive, too imaginative husband and father at the front.

Being stationed on the bluffs of the James as reserve and guard troops, Nathaniel had missed the June fighting at Gaines' Mill east of Richmond, which he has described, adding that Wise threatened Colonel Goode with court martial when he wanted to take his men into the fighting. In July Lee made a desperate attempt to dislodge McClellan at Malvern Hills, failing by a hairsbreadth. On the 29th during intensive drilling, Nathaniel writes: "We all think the next great battle will be fought by Jackson & Pope west of Richmond. We are still reinforcing Jackson from this Army, & it is thought McClellan is sending his forces off to Pope:"

August 14—[Col. Goode] says that our Brigade is in no Division but is on detached service. All the other troops from around us on this side of the River have been sent off—to Jackson I suppose. We are expecting the next great battle to take place on the Rapidan, and as the Enemy cannot fall back on their Gun boats there, we hope, if old Stonewall meets with his customary success, to make it necessary for Lincoln to call again for six hundred thousand additional troops.

A signal defeat there will I hope bring the North somewhat to its senses. They must be now feeling heavily the weight of the war & of Lincoln's tyranny. After supporting such an army as they have had, and for so long a time, an additional draft for 600,000 troops, and the taxes necessary for arming, equipping & supporting such an army must bear heavily on any people.

But they can never feel it as we have. The men they have heretofore sent have been foreigners & from the lowest classes [this may be a general southern delusion; Nathaniel mentions it several times in 1862; yet he had seen a number of prisoners, speaking well of the officers]. And the war has been carried on on our own soil entirely. No one can begin to conceive of the horrors & devastation of war, until they have seen the country which has been passed over by two large, hostile armies.

But I would feel perfectly satisfied to have peace now, without attempting to punish them by an invasion of their territory. . . .

Though he did not ask for retaliatory raids, he exulted in them when they came a few weeks later, hoping, however, for peace not revenge:

September 10--The papers continue to bring us, slowly, glorious news from all parts of our lines—success everywhere—the enemy driven back and dispirited—our armies crossing the Potomac & Ohio, and threatening their own country with the desolation which they have spread so cruelly & so widely over ours, giving strength & energy & success to our cause. Should we not, with thankful hearts, pray even more earnestly that these successes may speedily be crowned with the long-desired peace?

A good many people are disposed to feel uneasy for that portion of our army which has passed over into Maryland. But I do not—Lee & Jackson have always been too prudent to undertake any step rashly now, which may throw a damper on our recent successes—and I believe the time has come when we will have no more, or, if any, but very slight reverses. And then soon, if nothing happens to our armies—Oh! it cannot come too soon!—will come the glad tidings of propositions for peace--of troubles in the North—of a glorious peace, & recognition of our Southern Confederacy. And then, darling, we will come Home--and begin to live again. . . .

I was very glad to hear that your Pa had succeeded in getting salt for us, even at $12. a bushel [he had for months been urging the importance of salt—for the cattle and for curing meat--and scarcity was skyrocketing the price]. Had I known it a little sooner, I might have bought Liverpool salt in Maryland, & had it delivered in Richmond at $10. a sack, but it is too late now—can't get it at less than $50. . . .

September 17—The news again this morning was still encouraging and of a more important character than any before received. The surrender of Harper's Ferry with 10,000 prisoners & arms & artillery was a great loss to the enemy, and of much importance to us as it opens a communication between our army in Maryland and the Valley of Virginia; and affords a strong retreat for our army in case it is compelled to fall back, to recross the Potomoc.

The defeat of McClellan too with 80,000 by Hill, first with 15,000; & then with not over 40,000 (after Longstreet had joined him), if only a partial victory, accomplished its end; as it ensured the capture of Harper's Ferry—and demonstrated still farther the superiority of our officers & troops over the enemy.

The news of the uprising in Kentucy & Missouri—the 20,000 Missourians with the Lt. Gov. at their head declaring for the Confederacy—is of more importance than a signal victory. Yes,

Darling, as you say, the God of battles is for us. And I am glad to see that our authorities and people are all willing to acknowledge it. I have been struck with the dispatches of all our Gens. after every victory. No boasting, no claiming any credit for themselves, but giving all the glory to God and acknowledging his hand always.

How different from the lying, braggadocio, fanfaronading of the Yankees—claiming always a victory from their own skill, & the valor of their troops, even while flying before our victorious armies. They almost seem to ignore the existence of God [He seems to forget his own boast two paragraphs above about "the superiority of our officers and troops"]. . . .

But glorious news did not come every day, and much of the time Nathaniel was chafing; being in a reserve brigade was less risky, also more boring. And the puritan in him was constantly irritated by loose talk and meaningless profanity:

There is nothing so unpleasant & painful to me as a promiscuous crowd. The conversation, even in our company, which is one of the most moral & picked companies I have seen, is frequently so immoral and profane that I feel it pollutes and demoralizes a person to hear it. It is almost impossible for me to read even the most interesting novel--or to follow any train of thought on the most interesting subject here. I feel lonely frequently even in the largest crowd, & walk off alone for company—but more frequently take Doc or Sam along with me. . . .

There is something very refreshing in the sleep a soldier gets in his tent. His bed is hard, he gets enough fresh air, he is at rest from all his cares, & his dreams are generally of home. I make it a point of conscience never to wake a sleeping soldier unless for duty. . . .

He was still coy about becoming an officer himself; yet if he had shifted his regiment on this occasion he would have gone to Gettysburg, where this Captain Baskerville, as we shall hear later, was killed:

Our Quarter master sergeant Mason, a nice fellow . . . told me Tuesday that he saw Capt. Baskerville [a friend and neighbor from Granville] in Richmond on his return, & he sent me word he wanted me very much in L's place. Mason seemed anxious that I should go and attempt to get the place. But I prefer not,—if I am elected without any effort on my part, I may reluctantly accept,—but I believe I had rather be in this company now than in any I know; and there is not so much after all, in having a commission in such an army as we have [his opinion of the army changes considerably within the year]. My desire is simply to do my duty—with no aspirations for military fame or promotion, and to get back as

quickly as possible to those I love so much. . . .

It is 9 o'clock at night, & I am on guard. The moon is shining so beautifully I can't resist the temptation to talk with you a little more. . . . What wouldn't I give now just to look in on you & Charley & Minnie, & see how sweetly you are sleeping—perhaps dreaming of me. I know that the Holy Angels are watching over you—I know that God encircles my little birds in His arms of tenderness & love. . . .

This makes him feel decidedly sheepish the next morning; he dismisses it: "So much for a moon-light epistle. I will write a few statements about Boulware's Farm for your Pa." There follows one of his frequent detailed accounts of crops, farming methods, good and bad; for he always observed such things with intense interest and an eye to betterment of his own farm, which even during the War he is trying to improve:

I wish to get [my little orchard] at least twice as large as it is now. . . to have the rest of what is now enclosed planted in trees this Fall. By referring to one of my small note books (just like your receipt book) you can find a map of the varieties as they are planted. It might be best to get some peach as well as apple trees, & plant the peach in the intervals between the apple trees. . . .

The scarcity of fruit in the army, he says, has made him more than ever aware of the importance of an orchard; and he had discovered that even half-ripe fruit and vegetables whenever he could buy them at a neighboring farm cured diarrhea.

He invariably includes in his letters elaborate instructions, which, since they are boring to all but farmers, I omit except for one typical example showing what was constantly on his mind.

I am afraid the rains have interfered a good deal with my wheat threshing, & the wheat threshing fully as much with my fallowing. I wish all of the best land around the granary to be fallowed if it can be done, & sowed as early as possible, & then for all the corn land near the double barn to be sowed in wheat.

Mr. Harris' system of drainage will not answer for my land. The furrows must be closer together—9 ft. beds—Just as I had it last year, with good strong hill side ditches, well cleaned out & close together, and cross furrows through all the wet places.

I wish my wheat well washed & limed before sowing & the seed wheat run through the fan at least three times, & oftener if necessary. Ben Morton can get the lime, & I wish it gotten even if it costs $10. a barrel. . . . I wish my tobacco cured with as little smoke as possible—& tell Smiley [overseer] to watch it carefully when curing, & see that it does not mould. I prefer smoke to mould. . . .

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> For this reason, an especial care should be had to making as much manure as possible, & keeping it as well protected by trenches &c. from the washing rains of winter. All kinds of litter—old straw, leaves, corn stalks &c. should be hauled to the stables & farm pens at every opportunity. . . .

He was not finding farming by correspondence very satisfactory; for six weeks he had made every effort without success to get a furlough:

> July 25—It is the thought of being kept here, in one day's ride of home, doing nothing but drilling (and I know about as much of that as any of my officers) and ditching,--and what little ditching I do in a week might be done by Henry [negro], if he were well, in one or two hours.

Furthermore, wistfully:

> Sam Graham got a letter from Aunt Judy yesterday, stating that a good many young men from the neighborhood had gotten substitutes and come home, and offering to send him one if he wished it. Sam, I believe, won't have one,—but if you had made me the offer, I think just now, that without hesitation I would accept it.

This frank, sometimes semi-humorous but nonetheless serious desire for a substitute alarms his wife Nancy, who had an even higher sense of duty than his own, which was high enough. For the next few months Nathaniel torments himself with the question of getting a substitute:

> July 24—Tom Boyd has a substitute, also Buck Daniel—& a number of friends whom I could mention. Why may not I get one? If there was a prospect of being permitted occasionally—once in four or five months, when the army is doing nothing, of spending a week or ten days at home, I might stand it pretty well. . . .
>
> August 7—You were entirely right about the substitute,—I wished to know if your Pa thought the losses on my farm from my absence were such as to justify me in employing one—thinking that possibly one might be had for five or six hundred dollars,—and if you thought it would be entirely right for me to leave the service & get one.
>
> I frequently think, when more than usually anxious to see you & our little ones that it would be right, & then again when I think soberly about it I think every man ought to be at his post in the army, & that those who are able to go as substitutes ought to be drafted. I see nothing to regret in any step that I have taken in joining the Army. . . .

Nancy, who has been busy feeding him starch, is pleased with her (temporary) success; for she writes in answer to this last:

Have just received two letters from you, one written Aug. 7th & the other the 9th containing one to Charley [Nathaniel and little Charley—aged 4—carried on a brisk illustrated correspondence, Charley's drawings being a shade superior to his father's]. . . . You can well imagine my great joy this morning to hear that you are well and still at the same place. . . . Although I know you love me so dearly, yet it is very sweet to hear you say so. Don't you remember how often I used to ask you if you loved me, just to hear you say "that I do dear."

I walked down the road to meet William [negro] and stopped in the first shade I could find on a plank back of the smoke house to read them. Smiley [overseer] saw that I had a letter and he came too and sat on the other end of the plank—I got one from Pattie too, so you see I had a rare feast. Charley seemed to think it was very funny for the little frogs to climb up on your tent and when I read about the pears & peaches he said "Yes Ma let us send Pa some peaches." He is out under the oak with Tilmah & Abel [two little negroes] making little houses. . . .

I am so glad you are just where you are. Providence has ordered it all. You have been spared in a wonderful manner. I feel perfectly willing even happy to trust my all in His hands. . . .

This does not keep her entirely reconciled; ten days later she writes:

Oh darling it has been such a long long time since you left. It seems more like six years than six months since we were together at our dear home. . . .

Darling do you see any chance of peace? I feel desperate when I think of this war lasting a year longer—Some think it will last the whole of Lincoln's administration, but I cannot believe it, if I did I would go mad. I cannot live without you my precious and the longer we are separated the dearer you are to me. . . .

If Smiley leaves, your Pa had better get some man on whom he can rely to stay at my place. The negroes (for their own sakes) shouldn't be left entirely alone. . . . I didn't make my arrangements to be so long from you. I can't help feeling sometimes as if there are some things that you are keeping from me, & then I always feel troubled. . . .

I could get the two days, but the passport is the difficulty. I could run the blockade home almost any time were it not for the passport system, or even if I would be a bit dishonest about that. But I had rather not come than use any underhanded means, however great the temptation may be.

In matters of principle he has almost a moral meningitis. Desperate though he is to go home, a year later on his way to South Carolina,

even though Colonel Goode personally urges him to slip away for a brief visit, he refuses because it is not regular.

But on September second news of the "glorious victory over Pope & McClellan at or near Manassus" (Second Battle) occupies his mind, and on September 17th he begins to plan for winter quarters at Chaffin's Bluff:

> I asked the Capt. this morning for permission for five of us (our crowd) to have a separate house built for ourselves, at our expense; and he promised to see Col. Page to-day, & find if he could allow this. If he does, I will employ a farmer in the neighborhood to send his carts & hands & build us a snug cabin, which we will have entirely to ourselves, & under our own control. The houses which the government will give us will be, I fear, too much crowded for health or comfort. I am exempt from all this labor as long as the court keeps in session [he had been made clerk of the Military Court], and as it only employs me now for about four hours in the evening, I have the rest of the day to stroll where I will, or do what I choose.

Not only reasons of health but desire for more privacy and less noise prompted him. He had frequently complained: "It is almost impossible for me to read even the most interesting novel" because of the constant talk. Reading was of course a chief diversion:

> I have been reading to-day a tract of I. Randolph Tucker, Attorney General of Virginia—"The Bible or Atheism" of 30 pages. It is a fine thing, but too deep & metaphysical for general reading—but few soldiers can understand it, & but few will undertake it, on account of its length.

To him, in common with a great many in this country and England during the nineteenth century, all novels—even those that we regard as weighty—were light, almost frivolous entertainment compared to the serious reading of moral and philosophical tracts, sermons, such subjects as natural philosophy. Nathaniel often thinks longingly of his own books at home:

> Please have the books in my library carefully wiped, as they are very mouldy. Smiley can take Polly [negro] some day & do this.

He quickly exhausts the bookstores in Richmond:

> Sept. 7—While in Rmond last week, I examined the book stores for some good light reading for camp. Couldn't find a novel at all except Robinson Cruesoe & the Pilgrim's Progress. I got the Pilgrim's Progress & Wm. Hayes' Blind Bartimeus, & intended getting Rob. Cruesoe, but forgot it.
>
> It is impossible to do any reading but the lightest kind in camp,

on account of the frequent interruptions, and the bookstores are almost entirely destitute of this kind of reading matter. . . .

Have you received my likeness yet? What do you think of it? . . . It isn't quite as good-looking as I am now, since I have gotten Jaundice. . . .

Sept. 24—I would be glad if you would send me occasionally a copy of the N. C. Presbyterian—only such copies as you think are very interesting. Also send, if you have an opportunity, any books of light reading that will not be of much worth in a library. If you can get hold of a copy of Adam Bede, I would like to read it again very much. [Seemingly Adam Bede, first published three years before, was worth re-reading but too light-weight to be "of much worth in a library."]. . . We can't find such reading in Richmond, & can't do solid reading in camp—can find good religious books, but nothing that we can pick up at any time, & pass off an hour in forgetfulness.

In October twenty-five in his company, including himself, are down with chills and quinine is scarce, but he continues writing from his sick-bed:

October 16—A book goes farther towards making me happy than anything else; for if I can get busied in reading so as fully to occupy my mind, I am then happy in forgetfulness. . . .

I have laid off enough pages & paragraphs to make a large volume, which I think to myself I will read to you when we get settled down again in our dear Home.

I am reading now an Essay on Burns & his Poetry—his Genius & character, by professor Wilson of Edinburg; a sketch of my favorite poet by one of my favorite authors. Every page almost I find something which I wish to read to you. . . .

There are some half dozen volumes of Washington Irving's works in our little library; I frequently think of how fond Charley [Charles Read Daniel, his wife's brother, now dead] was of reading them, and how you liked them. Daniel Booker is a great reader—he seems to devour book after book, and never seems to be at all low-spirited or under the blues.

Building their winter quarters took weeks longer than he expected. It was early November before they could gather around their own fire and congratulate themselves—seven of them:

Our six boys and a Mr. Perkins, who is a good hearted & very eccentric boy of 19. Is a tremendous great fellow, ugly, crosseyed, as strong as Samson almost, and has taken a great fancy to our boys. Is a fine mess mate. . . .

As the letters show in detail, "all our six boys" depended largely on boxes of food and items of clothing and cover from home; when boxes

came they lived high, the rest of the time meagerly. Nathaniel later shocks his wife by writing for socks for this young, barefoot Mr. Perkins, who has no one to send him boxes. With the cabin morale improved and they recaptured some of the hunting-camp atmosphere of Gloucester Point:

> November 5—We cut the posts out of the woods yesterday—nice birch posts. Everything decidedly gothic, especially the chimney, which was put up principally by Jim Davis & me; & instead of running it up exactly perpendicularly, as all of the others were, we made a pleasing variety by giving ours three graceful bends, which not only set it off considerably (from the house), but, as we contend, causes it to draw much better.
>
> Daniel suggested that now we can bolt our door on the inside, & shut out intruders & loafers, we ought to begin a regular course of study of history, & it was proposed & agreed to that I should lecture nightly on English History, which was demurred to by me,—and in its stead a free & easy club ("The Litterary Club") was proposed. Each member of the club to read some useful book during the day and all of us to spend an hour at night, by fire-light (as candles are costly) telling to the club the gist of the information he had collected during the day.

He was reading voraciously—"novels, history, miscellanies, &c." And the others followed his example; but Nathaniel found it hard to get them to be systematic, and "all reading does very little good without system." Once more he declined to seek promotion—not only his distaste for bloodshed, but his distrust of his temper in the fierce heat of conflict made him hesitate:

> There will be an election for 2d Lt. in our company next week, & some of the men are very anxious for me to run, but for reasons which it will be useless to mention here, & which I know you will approve, I have determined to decline. . . . I am almost sure I could get it if I were to make the necessary efforts, but for good reasons I prefer not. Although I have very little admiration for our old Capt. (old Razor-blade we call him), I am sorry that there is going to be a change, as I fear we will not be bettered. . . .
>
> November 28—God grant that this cruel, unnecessary war may soon close. I can see nothing from the papers to throw any light on our own or the enemy's plans, or any light either on the dark cloud which has, since Gen'l. Lee's crossing into Maryland, been resting on our cause everywhere. I wish I could always be as trusting & full of faith as you are.
>
> December 3—You will probably be surprised to hear that even now, some of this company are barefooted, and more surprised to learn that one of our mess (Perkins, the man for whom I wrote for socks) has been barefooted for two months, & is now sick from

exposure while barefooted. . . . From the amount of Jackets & pants which has been distributed to our company this week, I hope the army must now be well supplied with clothing. . . .

We will begin to-night to commence our regular course of history—Will spend one hour every night just after roll-call, which is at 8 o'clock, in reading, & questioning, & talking about the History of the United States, beginning with the discovery of America. Such catch times as we will have during the day will be spent in miscellaneous reading: but everything will be made to give way to History from 8 to 9 o'clock at night. . . .

It always gave me so much pleasure to teach other children, I have frequently thought it would give me much more to teach my own, to begin with them while young and teach them from the first in my own way. I think you ought to spend a short time with [Charley] every day, making it, for it can be made, interesting to him. All the talk about children beginning too young is humbug. . . .

All of them have good beds, he reports, "except old Perkins, who sleeps on a couple of planks, with two blankets & a Yankee oilcloth which he got in the battle of Seven Pines. From what I have seen since I have been in the army, white men can stand exposure & hardship much better than negroes, especially in cold weather."

As always, he was excited by artillery practice and very much interested in any new kind of gun:

It fell to my lot to fire off the first mortar. We put in the first load 10 lbs. of powder & a shell so heavy that it took two men to put it in. After it was loaded I had to put in the cap, pull the string (about a yard long) to fire the gun. At the word "ready" the whole crew & all the officers ran off of the platform, leaving me alone with the great monster of a gun. "Fire," and I pulled the string—the old thing went off. I can't describe the feeling exactly, but it felt as if a thousand pins were sticking in my ears, as if the whole explosion had taken place somewhere in my head. I have frequently been near heavy guns, & light field pieces when fired off, but had never before known what it was to be jarred by a gun.

Abe Daniel was acting as gunner, and did the loading. The next time I suffered so much from the jar I got him to fire. It knocked Abe's cap off, & turned him almost around, but he said didn't hurt him at all; so I gave the string up to him. . . .

Every load costs the government between $20 & 30, and we shot off in a short time over a hundred dollars worth of ammunition [how picayune this cost of destruction, which so impressed him, to our ears!]. As late as this evening my head & ears felt as if I had taken a large dose of quinine. . . .

In the meantime Patty's letters to her brother were as full of news as ever—increasingly full of wounds and deaths of relatives and

friends. But tobacco is selling at a good price; "Sister Sue is Dyeing & hanking & talking about cloth all the time;" Cousins Dave and Will Morton have bought the Bridge for "29000$;" Cousin Eppie McCormick "had a large fortune left her, 60 000$;" Sister Sue had received letters through the lines (six months in transit) from Betsy Ann and Mary Ballantine in Indiana. Letters went back and forth at long intervals but steadily during the War, usually through Baltimore.

> You will have to get a transfer to the Prince Edward Cavalry if you want to get home. Stewart rides them so hard they are killing up their horses & coming home every few weeks to get new ones. . . Brother Dick was riding his horse when he got wounded & the Yankees got him. He says during the raid into Penn. they went 28 hours without stopping even to water their horses. . . . He says he wants to join your company very much but there is no chance now since he is made Captain.

Though southern victories were heartening, Nathaniel could not help noticing a stiffening of northern resistance, and he was losing his earlier hopes for foreign aid:

> Nov. 2—I have hoped until I have almost ceased to hope that something will turn up to put an end to this cruel war very soon now. But I see no stronger indications of a cessation of the war now than have appeared all along. The North seems fully as much united & determined, and foreign nations fully as much undecided—or rather decided, not to interfere. . . .
>
> Nov. 23—I sometimes fear that my desponding letters, my great anxiety to get out of the service, my frequent complaints, & my anxiety to get a substitute may give you a poor opinion of my firmness, & may lessen your esteem & respect for me.
>
> It is not the hardships, nor privations, nor dangers, nor anything of this kind which affects me; I don't think I regard these at all. . . . I know I have stood them as well as anyone so far. But it is my love & anxiety for, & dependence on my little family & my home for happiness which sometimes almost drive me mad with the idea that months may now pass before I will be allowed to see them.

He had urged her to come up to Richmond, as other wives were doing, but for no clear reason she continued to put it off. This is one instance where she seems uncharacteristically timid and heartless, and some bitterness edges his disappointment. She wrote a few days earlier, sympathetic and extremely sensible:

> I sympathize with you darling in all of your feelings and the only thing that enables me to bear our separation at all is the conviction that you are doing your duty; though I do not wish to influence you at all in this matter, yet I think you are doing right as far as I can

see, in not getting a substitute now. I think it is the duty of every able-bodied man to do his part in this struggle for freedom and we may say existence.

I made up my mind when I consented for you to join the army to try and stand it a year. If you wait till you have been in service that length of time can you not see better what is your duty? Perhaps by that time we may have hope of peace—at any rate I think you will be justifiable in getting a substitute next Spring, if you feel then that you ought to be at home. Most of the men who have substitutes have served one year. If you were not in such a comfortable safe place I expect I might think differently, and if I consulted my feelings & inclinations I would have you at home. . . .

And there is another consideration. If the State is invaded the Governor will call out the substitute men, they are liable to State duty. I think it very probable that they will be called out this winter, as it is very evident that the Yankees will attempt to take Weldon in order to cut off communication between Richmond & the South—I have now told you my candid opinion as you have several times requested to know it, but I wish you to act entirely independent of it and do as you think best, and know it will be all right.

Maria [negro] is better. Phoebe [negro] is spinning me a dress, has spun half enough already. They have sowed about 80 bushels of wheat and I dont know how many oats. They will sow till it is too late. . . .

I cannot tell you how much I want to see you. I wish I could tell you how much I love you but you can never know the half. . . .

Sister Martha says she is at a loss to know which of you has the itch, you or cousin Abe. He said you had it and you say he has it—she says she believes both of you told the truth before you went in the army but she doesn't believe either of you now.

For a time he drops the subject of substitutes and abandons his hope that she will visit him in Richmond, though he makes a pointed oblique reference to having had "about three weeks of holiday [from the Military Court, of which he was Clerk]—nothing to do but occasionally write for an hour or two." Three weeks, he implies, which he might have spent in Richmond with her.

I differ with your Pa about the prospects of peace. I think the signs of peace are nothing like as good as they were during the summer, & before the North submitted so patiently to Lincoln's call for various fresh men. The Democratic success will have no effect, and certainly has had none, as we can see from the fact of McClellan's being superceded.

The success of the Democrats at the North does not indicate peace any more than the success of the old-line Whigs in the South would indicate that the feelings in favor of a reconstruction of the

Old Union was gaining ground at the South. The northern Democrats claim to be "The war party," and still foolishly talk about a reconstruction. I would sooner have seen the Republicans sweep everything. Their wild fanaticism & extravagance would sooner have brought matters to a close, I think.

Our affairs look more gloomy to me now than they did last winter, not that I haven't confidence in our final success, but peace seems farther removed, without direct foreign intervention.

Nathaniel fills in his "holiday" as well as he can, going into Richmond--"can go in whenever I wish" (another oblique censure of her failure to join him there)—and even down to Malvern Hills. He had a strong historical sense, and this excursion makes one wonder whether he was consciously revisiting the scenes where his family had spent their first hundred years in this country, where a curious fate had led him to defend and then abandon what had been the paternal acres of Henry of Henrico, Thomas of Swift Creek, and Thomas of Chickahominy. Furthermore, his first month had been spent at Yorktown, where his wife's forebears got their start; for Washington had surrendered to Cornwallis on what had a century earlier been the farm of Nicholas Martiau, then of George Read, his son-in-law.

Early in December the Daniels send word that Nancy is sick with typhoid fever. He is crushed, for this is the sort of thing he had feared all along—a fear fed by all of Patty's reports of sickness and deaths; but he writes with what cheerfulness he can, while the soldiers outside are singing a hymn with a chorus "touchingly suited to the soldier."

> On the other side of Jordan,
> There is rest for the weary,
> There is rest for the soul.

This was perhaps the low point of his morale. During his nine months in the army—six of complete inactivity—he had been four times hospitalized with dysentery, kidney stone, jaundice, malaria. He had warned that if his wife died while he was unable to get to her he would never forgive his country; but fortunately at last he was allowed a furlough to Granville County.

Nancy Watkins did not succumb, and after a month at home Nathaniel returned to Chaffin's Bluff just below Richmond on the James January 22 1863 a much more cheerful man, full of schemes, among them sending the Southern Literary Messenger to his sister-in-law, Martha Daniel, and his sister Patty—"It is a very good paper & I wish to encourage it." Even in winter things are stirring:

> Jan. 27—The Richmond & Petersburg R.R. has been running continually for the last two days & nights, transporting troops, I think, from Petersburg to Genl. Lee [in no war since has there been such

> complete lack of censorship of troop movements and military news] . . . .
>
> The Merrimack No. 2, or Richmond, has taken advantage of the slight rise in James River and come down to Drury's Bluff, where she is in water deep enough for her, with a full complement of guns & ammunition. It is reported that she intends making a dash at some Yankee gun-boats now lying near City Point. A company from Chaffin's Bluff made a reconnaissance down the James to City Point last night in barges, and passed all among & around the gun-boats, & so near to them that they could hear the Yankees talking & see the sentinel on post. . . .
>
> Jan. 29—Though I acknowledge the rumors about the wide-spread disaffection at the North-west are beginning to be as stale and meaningless as the frequent reports about recognition & intervention; yet they do mean something, &, if this disaffection does not really exist, the mere talking & writing about it so much will have an effect at the North & may have a tendency to bring about this very state of things.

There are also rumors that Generals G. W. Smith and A. I. Hill have resigned, that Hooker, "as the Examiner calls him, the pugnacious Doodlebug," has changed his base, that the war will be transferred south to Charleston, with Pickett's division already on the way.

After the disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg, Burnside, determined to recoup, had spent January marching through the mud and rain of northern Virginia, but had to retire, and on Lincoln's order turn his command over to Hooker. The North was considerably depressed by Burnside's blunders. Nathaniel refers again, somewhat skeptically, to rumors that Indiana and Illinois had sent commissioners secretly to consider admission to the Confederacy. But he does feel that the bill authorizing the raising of negro regiments, recently enacted by the United States Congress, would cause trouble and was "a great evidence of their weakness. He and "the boys" are becoming intellectual again:

> We have constantly on hand some subject for discussion—in which all take an excited interest—embracing everything, from "Whose morning it is to sweep the floor," to some of the most subtle points of politics, physics, & philosophy. Several of us have been reading Wells' Natural Philosophy, and frequent & warm are the discussions on questions which are constantly presenting themselves. Our last one was on the "effect of a vacuum on the weight of a body." . . .

He sent for his copy of Staunton's Chess Manual, his Bible and Dictionary—these three were to remain standard equipment.

To pay off his most pressing debts, Nathaniel through his wife and father-in-law was trying to arrange sale of 300 acres of Brookland to

Tom Carrington, a cousin and neighbor. He and Tom were always rubbing each other the wrong way. I quote this instance because it involves a negro marriage problem:

> I wish you & your Pa to tell Irving [negro] that under no circumstances & on no conditions will I allow him to have a wife at Tom Carrington's. As much as I like him, I had rather part with him than suffer this. And if Tom should send for him again, I wish him to send word back that I have advised him not to go. If your Pa or Mr. Hines would tell Tom this, it would stop him from persecuting Irving.
>
> This evident want of principle, which sticks out in all of Tom's dealings, makes me anxious for the land matter to be closed. . . . My land sale shall be my last dealings with him.

It was not; for despite this periodic friction the two men remained friends for life, partly because Nathaniel and Nancy were so devoted to Tom's wife, Lizzie Watkins Carrington. But Irving married elsewhere.

The bad weather so disastrous for Burnside continued all through February. Patty writes that Richard, their nephew Hal Edmunds, and the Prince Edward Cavalry are in snug winter quarters in King William, where they could get everything, "even had a bowl of eggnogg." The Granville crowd are snowed in, bored and restless. Nathaniel is still "studying Wells' Natural Philosophy, & thinking of my dear ones at Home—doing much more thinking than studying." He is worried about the sheep and stock:

> But more than all I have thought of the suffering of the poor soldiers in Lee's army—and thought how many of them would think this old leaky, wet, smoky cabin of ours as snug & warm & comfortable as I would the warm little nursery at your Pa's. I didn't mean by what I said about our cabin to complain—for few soldiers are more comfortably fixed than we are—and I feel truly thankful that we have such quarters.
>
> A large portion of our army is now moving from its positions around Fredericksburg, & going to some point south of Richmond—where no one knows but the authorities. Pickett's division [within four months to be decimated at Gettysburg] was yesterday on the march from Richmond towards Petersburg down the turnpike. . . . Sam Graham, Tom Watkins & one or two other boys went over to see their friends. There were about eight or ten thousand troops on the march, & others (Hood's division) were said to be passing through Richmond. . . .
>
> The boys saw they were well shod, and though dirty and ragged seemed to be pretty well clothed and in fine spirits. They have but few tents, and I can't, for the life of me, understand how thousands of men can live out of doors during such a spell as we are now

> having, and a great many of them not freeze to death.
>
> Here, situated as we are, we do not begin to know the hardships of a soldier's life. 'Tis true, when our boxes from home give out, the fare is as hard as elsewhere. . . . Strange and unreasonable as it may seem, our army is said to be now in better health & better spirits than it ever has been, & a majority of soldiers in Lee's army would dislike to change places with us. . . .
>
> The soldiers who have the easiest places & less to do are generally the greatest grumblers and fault-finders. . . .

From self-knowledge he is deriving the beginning of wisdom. From scorn of the army, almost in spite of himself he is coming to admire it (these of course were troops who had seen plenty of action). And as soon as his own brigade is given something to do his complaints at once diminish. The government is now issuing "about a half allowance of meat, and makes up the deficiency by giving each man about two pounds of sugar a week. The meat I never touch in any form."

In March Patty writes to Nancy that "Sister Sue is as busy as a hen with one chicken." Brother Richard has just narrowly escaped capture by the Yankees, and

> Mrs. Whittaker has lately gotten letters from Miss Sarah Skinner [now in Massachusetts]. She makes very particular inquiries after you & Cousin Judy Graham & all at your Pa's, says she feels the same towards her southern friends she always has. She & Mary Ballantine have been keeping up a brisk correspondence in order to hear from their southern friends oftener.
>
> She says Sister [Betsy Watkins Ballantine] & all of the family are well--all at home except Anna, who is teaching at Glendale, & Hal, who started to India as a missionary last fall. . . .

This is the Hal who wanted to "chum with" his Uncle Nathaniel at the University of Virginia in the fifties.

In March Nathaniel gets a week's furlough, and again goes home in April. But this unexpected second trip resulted from his wife's letter:

> Our dear little Charley, our precious boy has been taken from us. . . . The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his holy name. My heart is almost broken—but with the stroke He has given me Grace to bear it. May you be supported as I have been under this our first great affliction. . . .
>
> He died Saturday just before dinner—I tried to rouse him—and he thought I was hearing him say his prayers and repeated twice the little prayer I had taught him,
>
> Jesus tender sheepherd hear me
> Keep thy little lamb tonight
> Through the darkness be thou near me
> Watch my sheep till morning light

[illegible]

Oh! Darling it was so touching to hear him repeating it so slowly and every word so distinctly. It was very comforting to see that one of the last things he said while rational was to commit himself to Jesus. . . . Minnie was very sick at the time. . . .

Oh! that was a day never to be forgotten. I was afraid I would have to give them both up, but at the same time would say Not my will Lord but thine be done. Minnie is so much better . . . and I hope that she will be spared, she is doubly dear to us now. . . .

I do not wish you to come home and thus expose all that I hold dear in life. I can bear it all alone a great deal better than have you run the risk of taking the disease. . . .

Poor darling, the death of our little boy will be such a shock.

Patty writes Nancy a characteristically emotional and warm-hearted letter: "Oh my sister I need not tell you how we all weep with you. . . . Surely the billows have well nigh overwhelmed you & yet God is in the cloud as he is in the sunshine." A year later Nathaniel and Nancy lost a second child, but they got off lightly compared to some. Richard writes condolences, too, and remarks at the end of his letter, May 14th:

I hear it said this morning that Lincoln has called out 500,000 additional troops and thus this horrible war goes on. Well, if I am not killed I hope to see the old fellow through some of these days.

But a more tragic loss was in store for them all. It came as a greater shock on the heels of the brilliant though hideously bloody victory at Chancellorsville, where Hooker's plan to force Lee to fight in the open on two fronts was admirable, but inexplicably changed. With this stroke of luck, Lee chanced one of his risky defiances of military orthodoxy. The Confederates missed disaster by a hairbreadth, but Lee and Jackson on the flank attacked in the nick of time. Only the cool bravery and resourcefulness of a handful of northern troops stemmed the onslaught and prevented the butchery of the Union Army.

Nathaniel, returning from comforting his wife over Charley's death, writes on May 7th:

I reached camp yesterday morning safe & well—the trains all through were very much crowded with Longstreet's men going on to Petersburg with over 200 Yankee prisoners going to be exchanged—including two generals, 6 colonels, 7 Lt. Cols. 60 Capts. & 62 Lieutenants. It is reported in Camp this morning that Hooker & his staff have been captured. The Yankee Cavalry made a raid passing near Richmond & going from Fredericksburg down toward Yorktown—a very daring raid. . . . Our men from the Batteries go out several miles from the post picketing. . . . The Cavalry could easily have taken our guns. . . .

> On getting back, I found seven letters—two from you, one from Doc, Bro. Dick, Mr. Hines, Baskerville & Sis Sue. I will send them to you. Will you please keep them. Such sympathy & friendship & comfort as they contain is worth a great deal. . . .

Then came the staggering news that Stonewall Jackson had been accidentally shot:

> I almost feel willing, indeed I think I would be entirely willing to give Old Stonewall, if I could, my left arm, or my right hand, & give him his choice. His loss was greater than that of a Brigade—& to think it was done by his own men through mistake.

And Richard: "His life will ever be regarded as one of the most brilliant on record as well by other nations as our own."

When Lee wrote Jackson a letter of magnanimous praise after the battle of Chancellorsville, Jackson replied: "General Lee is very kind, but he should give the praise to God." In many ways "Bible-toting" Stonewall Jackson might have strayed from Oliver Cromwell's seventeenth century army. And Nathaniel Watkins, a little disturbed by the jubilation over Chancellorsville, echoes the sentiment:

> God may see fit to humble us of the South much more before we will give him all the glory & stop boasting of the mighty deeds of our skillful leaders & valiant troops.
>
> You ask what do I think of peace? I have almost stopped thinking of it. I have formed so many beautiful theories about how the war is to be brought to a close, & when it will be, and they have all turned out so different from what I had hoped & expected, that I have stopped theorising—and just try to feel thankful that the war is two years nearer a close, & I have gotten safely through one year of my time.

"I have stopped thinking now of the sacrifices & hardships we have to make," he writes his wife; and from now on, while he continues at intervals to agitate for furloughs, their roles are shifted. Nancy, as we have seen, had reconciled herself to a year's separation when he volunteered. The year was over, and now it is she who becomes increasingly impatient to have him home at almost any cost.

From May 20 1863 to January 4 1864 there is a complete gap in Nathaniel's letters; but by a curious accident of survival everyone of his wife's to him during this period was preserved, just when a shift to the home front is welcome.*

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*The War letters of Richard and Mary Purnell Dupuy Watkins, written almost daily, were placed by their son, Asa Dupuy Watkins, in the Archives of the Virginia Historical Society. As an officer with the 3rd Virginia Cavalry, Richard's experiences were more vivid and rigorous. The two sisters-in-law had similar situations: Mary

Chapter II. The Home Front: News from Tennessee; Gettysburg and Vicksburg; Blockade and Self-Sufficiency; Trouble Among the Negroes; Nathaniel off to Charleston
June 1863 - January 1864

In Nathaniel's absence Nancy was becoming adept in seeing that Mr. Smiley and the negroes carried out his detailed instructions at Brookland (her letters are almost as full of farming as his); she was staying with three-year-old Minnie at her fathers, Waterloo, but driving over to Brookland frequently to supervise the supervisor, since her husband was a fanatic and perfectionist about his farm:

> June 22 1863--I was very anxious to be at home during harvest and if Minnie continues to improve will go down this week. You need not be uneasy about my staying down there. I am not at all afraid and will certainly not stay there alone at night. . . .
>
> Mr. Mark Amber* was here Thursday. He has gotten a Substitute and is speculating, buys goods and provisions within the Yankee lines (runs the blockade) and brings them in and sells at high prices. There is not a member of the Amber family in the Army. . . .
>
> I never expect to be the same that I was before Charley's death and the many other trials of the past fifteen months. My feelings have undergone a complete change and I have grown old,--will never be so light-hearted & confident again. . . .
>
> Jordan [Negro] has just handed me a letter from you written the 18th, am glad to hear that you are well. You don't seem to write in such good spirits about the war. I feel more hopeful the last week than I have for months.
>
> I have heard a good many say that if we succeed in whipping Grant in the West Peace will not be far distant, as the game seems to be pretty well played out in the East. Lee has driven them back so often it will be hard for the Yankees ever to make a good fight again. Though we are anxious, yet we are all hopeful about our success at Vicksburg. . . .

(Footnote continued)
Watkins, in her husband's absence, in her mother's home, Linden, in Prince Edward County, keeping closely in touch with their home-farm, Oldham, just as Nancy, across the North Carolina border, from Waterloo supervised Brookland. Both groups of letters bear the same characteristics of warm detail, complete showing of thought, and deep tenderness.

*Substituted name. This Mark Amber was the brother of the Lemuel Amber who mistreated the little Negro girl.

I cannot believe that the Justice of Heaven will much longer permit their persecution of our people—All of us, though, think too hard of the punishment and not hard enough of our sins which have made the punishment necessary.

. . . Mr. Hines and fifteen other ministers have been appointed by Presbytery as missionaries to preach to the soldiers wherever they see fit. . . . He feels a tenderness for you that he does not feel for anyone else, says I must give a great deal of love to you always. Martha Horton always sends her best love to you and so does Lizzie Carrington & Mrs. Davis. I wish you could know how much the people around here love you; it is really affecting to see how much the Smileys love & depend on you, and the negroes too. . .

She goes on to relate in a troubled way the news from her grandfather Charles Lewis Read's family out in Tennessee: "The letters were sent to Shelbyville (then occupied by Bragg) by one of the Daniels who belonged to Bragg's army and who was at home. He was in the 9th Tenn. and had made his way through the Yankee lines." This is the gist:

All of Grandpa's family well, were surrounded by Yankees and suffering from their tyranny. Grandpa had lost only three of his negroes. They compelled the people to raise cotton and haul provisions to Brownsville, took their mules and horses & compelled them to pay for the property destroyed by our Guerillas.

I don't think those people in West Tenn. have acted right exactly, though we don't know the circumstances.

Just what in their behavior bothers her is impossible to tell, since the letters themselves are lost. But shortly after the War Charles Read writes a long letter (undated) about their experiences—in part:

Our section was wonderfully fortunate, our losses not being very great considering they were stationed for a long time at Fort Pillow 30 miles to the west, & at Jackson 34 miles East, & at Brownsville 8 miles, makeing their Cavalry raids constantly from one point or the other, feeding upon us & taking our horses, & Jayhawking us.

I was Jayhawked twice; once with a Rope to hang me, which so frightened my wife & Girls that my wife to whom I gave $400. for safe keeping, gave it up to the miscreants. At this time they broke open my door & violently seized me with two pistols in hand pointed to my brest & head. The seckond time they threatened to burn my house if I did not give them $500. I refused, they got some old dry board near by & commenced preparing with matches to set fire. I still refused. They demanded my gold watch. I refused to give that up. I thretened to go to the command (a mile off) & report them if they did not desist; they got nothing & left.

In both cases they stationed guards around the house & would not permit a servant to come in or go out thretening to shoot them. I rang a bell at which signal the negroe men came but their lives were thretened. The greatest loss I sustained was 77 Bales of Cotton burned by our army agreeable to orders. I lost in the Cotton $15000. . . .

In Granville all was bustle and excitement; everybody was busy extemporising new sources of supplies pinched by the blockade, and increased movement of troops toward Pennsylvania lent a festive air, for soldiers and officers had to be entertained:

June 25—The girls [her three young sisters] came back Tuesday very much pleased with their visit—two soldiers staid all night at Cousin Abram's—very nice fellows . . . one of them is cousin to Gen'l. Pender. The girls went from Brownsville to Mr. Speed, and there was a house full and a real big dinner for "war times." Pound & Sponge cake, citron &c. . . .

The young ablebodied men who are now at home compare very unfavorably with those who have laid aside every selfish feeling and have given up their homes with all of its comforts & pleasures to go and fight the enemies of our country—Oh! I do feel proud of our noble soldiers. . . . The war cannot last much longer and how happy it will make you to know that you have done your part.

Things seem to be brightening up everywhere. News from the West cheering and the whole North in commotion and scared to death at the idea of Lee invading their country. . . .

To read these signs of the growing excitement, the increased tempo of troop movements and preparations for the invasion of Pennsylvania—and then the slow trickling through of news from Gettysburg, is like watching in a theater Shakespehre's dramatization of the battle of Actium, with those numerous short scenes of feverish marching and exhortation, the moment of quiet for the action offstage, then Enobarbus: "Nought, nought, all nought! I can behold no longer." And there must have been the same stirring in the wings of many a northern State rushing troops to the front—"the whole North in commotion," perhaps not as Nancy Watkins believes "scared to death at the idea of Lee invading their country," but certainly deeply concerned over the threat to Washington. Nancy herself is not unequivocally confident:

July 2—Pa & Uncle Billy [Negro] are hiving bees, the largest swarm I ever saw. Evening—James Nat has just come from the office with a letter from you of the 28th. I am so glad you have gotten well again. I feel uneasy about you as long as the Yankees are so near—hope Genl. Elzey will be sent off and someone else put in his place, am afraid he will commit some blunder. I feel

very uneasy for fear Richmond may be taken. Our people seem to feel too secure.

I am more hopeful since Lee has gone over into Penn. than I have felt for months. . . . I hope we will soon be together again at Home. I cannot think the Yankees will be crazy always. They must stop soon.

July 6—It is just after dinner, the girls have gone off upstairs. Pa has just started to the Post Office, and Minnie is here in the nursery playing around me. . . .

Five Cavalry men stayed here last night. They belong to the 2nd N.C. Regt. and are on their way to Pennsylvania. They were all very large fine looking soldiers. . . . The girls dressed up within an inch of their lives. You know they are very enthusiastic on the subject of soldiers, but unfortunately there was only one real nice looking fellow among them.

But home affairs and private cares almost blot out the unsuspected approaching climax, and even a war does not completely dampen a social people:

July 9—Ma is very busy having her women's [Negroes] summer clothes dyed. James Nat is reading his lesson and the girls all up stairs as usual.

I am sitting in the front door wishing that you were sitting here on the step by me and the war was over, and that you were telling me of all the interesting and amusing things which occurred while you were in the army—But we would not sit here long—would be right apt to see Irving [Negro] drive up with the old carriage and Nelly tied to the rack ready to take us back to our dear sweet, old Home. Oh! Darling will the happy time come for us to live together again in peace & happiness? I hope I am not too impatient. I have learned though now not to expect happiness here nor to make plans for the future—I do not look further into the future than to-morrow. Our precious little one is now as well as she ever was. . . . She has just come running in with a hand full of roses to ask me if I will have some. . . .

Willie Boyd has not been here since he left for Cousin Buck's. Expect he has fallen in love with some girl down there—the people down in that neighborhood frolic as much as if there was no war going on. There was a party at Charles Lewis' and one at Dr. Lewis' not long ago, and there will be a Pic Nic in the neighborhood of Oxford soon. I cannot see how people can enjoy such things when there is so much suffering and distress in our land. . . .

Yesterday's papers brought glorious news from Lee. The complete rout of the enemy and the capture of 40,000 prisoners. Hope it is true. At the same time the rumour comes that Vicksburg has fallen. We trust it is not so as we have heard it several times

before, but how hard it is to bear even the probability of a defeat, because we know it will encourage the Yankees and lengthen the war. . . .

But the "glorious news" from Lee was false and the grim rumor from Vicksburg true. Nancy's young sister, Lucy Daniel, writes to her brother-in-law three days later:

> What do you think of the fall of Vicksburg? I felt as if I could not give it up, we had held it so long. It discourages me very much. . . .

But she was too young to realize the implications, prattling all the Granville gossip:

> Mr. Prout (an Episcopalian minister) baptized a child at Williamsboro a week ago, crossed his forehead and pronounced him regenerated! . . . Mrs. Nancy Gregory has bought a new carriage like Aunt Nancy's and gave twelve hundred dollars for it,—Nannie flourished around at the Pic Nic in it. . . . The deserts have put up a notice at the Xroads that Mr. James Amber and Mr. Hester must pick out their graves. They intend killing them because they have been looking and having them taken up. . . .

And Nancy in the same mail:

> Lemuel Amber, Jim Shotwell & Co. are croaking now—crying down the Confederacy—"they always said we would be whipped" &c. I just want all such men to be forced into the army and put in the front ranks, and if they live through the war they ought not to be allowed to enjoy any of the blessings of Peace and Independence. . . All of our people are passing through the fire of affliction & trial. I know scarcely any who are exempt. Our trials though severe are much lighter than some others and we have much left to enjoy.

The tidings, dreadful to how many homes among the victors as well as vanquished, is seeping back:

> July 15—James Nat has just come from Cousin Goodie's and heard there that James Royster & George are at home wounded and that George says he helped to bury Mr. Baskerville at Gettysburg. Oh! my Darling, this terrible war, will it never end? I feel as if it is coming nearer & nearer to us all God help us.
>
> My poor wicked heart is very ungrateful & rebellious sometimes and I know that I do not deserve one of the least of his blessings. . . . If I still have you my dearest treasure and our little Minnie we cannot wish for more. If the Yankees take all of our property—we can still be happy together.
>
> July 20—. . . nearly every man in the army from around here was killed in the late battle in Pennsylvania. I never heard of such

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

slaughter. There were about 20 from "Oak Hill" & "Mountain Creek" killed. I understand there are only three of Captain Baskerville's old company left [this is the company which Captain Baskerville tried to persuade Nathaniel to join as Lieutenant] . . . . We have lost twice as many of our acquaintances in this last battle as we have during the whole war up to this time. The general exclamation is Oh! that Lee had never gone into Pennsylvania. . . .

Ruffin [Captain Baskerville's Negro body servant] came Friday. He gave a full account of his master's death. . . . He heard his voice calling him—was lying under a bush mortally wounded. The ball had entered his body, lodged in the lower part of the stomach. He asked Ruffin if he could bring him home. Ruffin told him no. He then asked if he could carry his body home. On being told that it could not be done he said, "Well, it makes no difference." Ruffin carried him to a house near by which had been deserted, got a bed, placed it before the front door, and he lingered till 8 o'clock next morning. . . . Ruffin says he talked very little but prayed all the time—told him to tell his wife, Mother & Sisters not to grieve for him—he was going to Heaven. . . . [They] buried him in an orchard on the Turnpike this side of Gettysburg. . . .

The little negro children sing a little humn that [Charley] used to sing a great deal and so sweetly—"You may have all this world." It affects me more than anything else and reminds me more of him. I can almost hear his little sweet voice among them. . . .

Do you not feel relieved since Lee has recrossed the Potomoc? I was so fearful all the time that he would be cut off or meet with some disaster. Oh if this war could only stop now. When will the Yankees let us alone. Our people are more serious and are more heartily sick of it than they have ever been before, and are more earnest in their desire for Peace.

It seems that they find great difficulty at the North in drafting men to carry on the war. I do hope the resistance and dissatisfaction will increase and that they will find fighting enough to do at home.

July 29—Willie Boyd is still here and is the greatest tease I ever saw. When he gets tired sitting still, he gets up and has a frolick with everybody in the house trying to kiss them. On such occasions he has the whole house in commotion, all screaming & running in different directions. Today Ma & I had to run in the nursery and shut the door, and the girls flew upstairs. Minnie says, "I f'aid of that old boy.". . .

It seems as if we will never hear the end of the number killed and wounded among our acquaintances in the battles in Penn. It seems as if the war has just commenced in earnest. The Yankees are making raids and desolating our country and our people seem to be incapable of resisting them. I am afraid our Country will be

overcome and our men all killed. I don't know what is to become of us. . . .

August 3—I hope there will never be another such battle. Doubtless many of our brave men were buried in heaps--far from home, and by unfriendly hands, and their friends will never know where they fell. . . .

With Vicksburg and Gettysburg the "war has just commenced in earnest," as Nancy says; the tide has definitely turned against the South, but few realize it, and the coup de grace is more than eighteen months away.

As early as November 2 1862 Nathaniel had written to his wife:

> I am very glad to hear that your Pa succeeded so well in making molasses. . . . The Yankees are determined to make us, if not independent as a nation, certainly independent as individuals & families. . . .

The blockade was seriously strangling the South. We have already heard the difficulty in getting salt and the extravagant prices it fetched. The agricultural South was ill prepared for self-sufficiency. Granville farmers were experimenting with everything, especially sugar cane and flax. Leather for shoes was short (Nathaniel makes frantic efforts to get new boots made for less than $45); goods smuggled through the lines were so dear that homespun was becoming the vogue even for men's clothes and looms were flashing as never before. Lying on her sickbed, Jane Read Daniel was "abusing the Yankees" and picking the seed out of cotton all day long.

> Ras [Negro] started off yesterday morning with about $3000 worth of wool for the factory, all the spare wool around here was sent to go with ours. . . .
>
> Aaron [Negro] brought your box of tobacco from Elliott's Saturday, it is very nice. . . . Ras came last Friday with the bale of cotton—think we made a splendid bargain. I never was as proud of anything of the kind in my life. . . .
>
> I have 8 fine shoats about the kitchen besides my two large hogs. I have 34 chickens large enough to eat and I am going to carry them all to Ma. . . . I never had them so thrifty before. . . . I give Phoeba [Negro] one out of every ten that she gets to be frying size and she takes great interest in it. Stock of all kinds looking well, but the weather does not suit sheep, we have lost four old sheep & one lamb since they were sheared. . . .
>
> Mrs. Smiley [overseer's wife] brought home a large piece of Shirting—just out of the loom and it is real nice cloth. I will carry it up to Pa's for Eliza to make up into pants & shirts. She made the last winter's clothes [for the Negroes]. . . .

Clothing for the Negroes had always been made on the place, under the supervision of old Theodore, who was trained as a weaver. But now the output had to be increased to include the whole household. And the same thing was going on in Prince Edward, as Susan Watkins Redd's hurried letters show and Patty's bulletins: "Sue is very much troubled that she can't get her summer cloth woven fast enough, it scuffles her right much to get round twice a year with homespun." Besides her own family, Susan had thirty-five Negroes to clothe. At Waterloo Jane Read Daniel "has just gotten a long piece of cloth (the women's summer dresses) out of the loom, and is fixing to have a piece of flannel woven for me." But Theodore and Phoebe and Eliza cannot handle it all any more:

> Ma intends having a nice loom set up in the nursery and learn us all to weave. It is so hard to get fine weaving done now, and the weavers charge so much we are going to try to weave our own dresses. . . .
>
> Was not my last letter a very doleful one? It was a real imposition on you. I was mad with myself for writing it and would have burned it if I could have laid hands on it, but it was too late. Please forgive me. I will not write another like it. I am ashamed that I should give expression to feelings so unworthy of a soldier's wife. [This refers to her despairing letter of July 29th, quoted above.]
>
> Minnie is a real little owl, rarely ever goes to sleep now at night till bed time. She has been in a frolic ever since I undressed her, running about in her gown. I have been very busy for two or three days having a piece of Cloth spooled & prepared to put in the loom. Eliza is very slow at it. . . .

Little Minnie is always erupting into these letters with a vivid thrust, and this is the sort of homely detail that Nathaniel at the front hungered for:

> She woke me up about day this morning to sing "Toiling here" with her. I did not enjoy singing at that unseasonable hour, but she joined in with great spirit. . . .

And often this commonplace detail creates a strong sense of being in the actual room with the writer:

> Ma has a good fire in her room and I am sitting at the little window in the nursery with Pa's old grey coat on. Minnie has a box of cornfield peas on the floor and calls them her cows. . . .
>
> Uncle Theodore got my cloth out yesterday and I feel very proud of such a long piece; it is so hard to get cloth of any kind nowadays. . . .

and what was smuggled through was inferior and expensive:

Sister Mildred is making up her new calico she gave $27. for in Boydton. It is right pretty now, but does not wash well. Cousin Abram has a full suit of cotton homespun, black & white. It looks very well and he is very proud of it.

Cousin Abram wanders in and out of the letters frequently. Abram Watkins Venable (a Presbyterian elder, of course) was in the political tradition of the Venables, and perhaps the most prominent man in Granville County. Graduated from Hampden-Sydney in 1816, he had received an M.A. from Princeton in 1819; served as Presidential elector on the Jackson-Van Buren ticket in 1832; elector again in 1834; member from North Carolina of the United States Congress 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853 (Richard Watkins had heard his tribute to Clay in 1849); and now Representative of the Granville district in the Confederate Congress. At this time he and his first cousin James Daniel both have "sugar cane fever:"

Pa is busy grinding the sugar cane. . . . Cousin Abram has two mills & two furnaces going all day and makes 30 or 40 gallons a day. He is grinding three crops, his, Martha's & Cousin Tom's. . .

Martha & Bella started last Wednesday to Petersburg—from there they will go to Synod, and from there to the "Natural Bridge," and come back the last of this month. I don't know what gentleman they will have to escort them [no Victorian lady traveled without a man] . . . .

Cousin Abram does not think of anything but molasses. As soon as we got in the house he had a plate & tea-spoon with a little molasses going around making everybody taste it—Cousin Isabella tried to stop him, but Pa told her to let him alone—give him a wide field to brag—they wouldn't let him do it at home. . . .

Cousin Abram thinks that one of the first things Congress [Confederate] will do will be to repeal the Substitutes law. I don't know whether to be glad or sorry. I know if all the men who are at home with substitutes were in the Army there would be a brighter prospect for an early Peace, but the idea of your being compelled to stay in the Army as long as the war lasts is dreadful to think of. . .

Cousin Abram came by and called a few minutes yesterday on his way from Oxford. He looked very much jaded, as he always does after Court. He said Ike Davis had bet $10 000 on the Tennessee election. Pa & Mr. Harris had concluded not to vote at all, as Arrington though true to his country is not a good man, but when they found the Old Whigs making every effort for Turner, they voted themselves and used their influence for Arrington as the least of two evils. . . .

Perhaps the best insight into the effectiveness of the Northern blockade and the passing of the old wasteful mode of life is her remark on October 19 1863:

> Reuben [Negro trained as cobbler] has just brought in his skins he has gotten from the tan-yard. One large hog skin & 2 dog skins [italics mine]. The hogskin is thick enough for sole leather, & the dog skins will make nice ladies shoes.
>
> We save everything now, and are surprised to find all such things as were thrown away before the war, so useful now. . . .
>
> November 2—I have commenced spinning flax again for shoe-thread. It is selling at the Fork at $25 per lb. and I have an idea of spinning enough to buy me a pair of wool cards. . . . They are hard to get. Ma sent to Oxford to-day for a Calico dress—I will keep mine new for next Summer, as it will be the only nice dress I will have.
>
> I don't know what we will do if the war lasts much longer. Our old supply cannot last always. Expect the gentlemen will have to hold the purse strings when the war is over and the stores begin to fill up again. I will be very willing for you to get me something besides a Calico dress when you go to Clarksville.
>
> We have learned many useful lessons though, and find we can get on very well with what we can make at home.

In June one of the Carrington Negroes had been caught trying to burn down the house; but most of the trouble with Negroes was petty thievery by those who had run off to the woods and were pillaging for food. By the middle of July "all of Lemuel Amber's negro women have run away," Lucy Daniel writes her brother-in-law, "and Goin has to cook for them;" and two weeks later Nancy begins the saga which I have earlier recounted of Amber's tragic little nine-year-old negro girl. In August "Pa has lost about 20 of his sheep. He thinks they have been caught by the runaway negroes in the woods." As cold weather approaches the raids increase, and so does Nancy's exasperation:

> October 15—The rogues have been worse lately than ever. They took all of Cousin Tom Venable's chickens at his plantation, all of Mort. Tanner's, five hogs from Meadows, and a good deal of corn out of his field. One of the Wilsons heard someone after his hogs and went and found the hair & blood & a dog, which he killed—the two negroes ran off. He found that the dog belongs to Tom Carrington's negroes. Lizzie Carrington says they have taken every potato she had.

Aunt Nancy's carriage horses disappear, and Irving [Negro], sleeping down at Brookland, frightens away thieves there. Mr. Meadows shoots Mr. Amber's Burwell, but, to his immense relief, does not kill him.

> Mr. Harris was with Cousin Abram all day yesterday hunting rogues. They found the things that were taken out of his office. Old Royster's Denis, the one who took my honey. He will be sold [not for taking the honey, but the office valuables]. . . .

The atmosphere becomes sultry, some of the Negroes desperate and defiant. the mood of the Whites ugly.

Nancy is even more upset by the profiteering from high prices and blockade running. On a brief visit to Sylvan Hill in August she writes: "The desire to make money and grow rich has taken possession of the souls of a great many, and this class do not care how long [the war] continues. Oh how heartless they must be. I never thought as little of money in my life." One neighbor openly boasts to Mr. Harris "that he was making money as fast as he could pick it up—selling corn at $30. per barrel &c. Mr. H. told him he thought he & the rest of the rich men ought to be made to go in the Army and let the poor men come home and make something too."

There is much sickness among the Negroes at Waterloo; and Nathaniel is having chills again at Chaffin's Bluff:

> Gousin Goodie says you must still guard against them and commence the quinine ten hours before the time the chill comes on every seventh day. Willie Wilson says he has had a great many cases of chills in his Regt. and he always gives Nitric acid after the chills are stopped. . . .

She is disturbed especially because "Cousin Tom told me this evening that old General Wise made his whole Brigade take a dose of Quinine & a dram every morning:"

> Do you take the whisky old Wise requires? He will make drunkards of his men. If you are compelled to put the cup to your lips, throw the contents over your shoulder.

Nathaniel simply repeats the assurance he had given her in similar circumstances the previous March:

> . . . while I will not pledge myself, for I have long ago determined never to pledge myself on this or on the use of tobacco, I have fully determined not to touch [it] while in the army except strictly as a medicine. . . .

Once determined, with the family stubbornness he rarely changed his mind; but though he refused to sign or make any pledge even for her, after the war he voluntarily gave up even smoking.

"Catharine [Negro]," Nancy writes, "has been about the house recovering from typhoid," and Aunt Judy's Sarah has it, too:

> Mas has been talking some of going to Buffalo Springs—but they will be so busy about the wheat this week & next I am afraid she will not get off. . . . If I can make out with our old Carriage or get Pa's when it is mended, and if we keep well I am going to Prince Edward. . . .

Patty had written that Mildred Watkins, Nathaniel's mother, now

seventy-four, was anxious to see them, and Susan urged them repeatedly to come.

Religious revivals were frequent all during the war:

> Fannie Watkins, Bettie Carrington Watkins, Sue Daniel & Bettie Watkins Morton came . . . and went with us to Church next day. Fannie did not enjoy the meeting at all and made every excuse to stay away. She ridiculed everything she saw and came out openly and expressed her distaste for everything of the kind [this same hypercritical Fannie finds the dresses of the ladies at Rockbridge Alum Springs in 1870 so "disgusting" that she leaves Patty alone there to shift for herself]. Poor child, I felt so sorry for her and hoped that, seeing so many of her friends seeking an interest in Christ, she would be made to feel, too, but she was entirely unmoved. . . . I never attended a more interesting meeting. There was no excitement and a great deal of deep feeling.

This was a Methodist meeting. The Rev. Mr. Hines expected to begin a Presbyterian meeting at Shiloh shortly after, and "We will commence at Baptist Grassy Creek on the 4th. . . ." The "deep feeling" was evidently ecumenical.

> Pa sent all of the servants who wished to go every day while the meeting was on. Several of them were among the anxious: Liz, Celia, Reuben, Uncles Big Billy and Tom, & my Eliza. . . .

This may be merely personal pride and pleasure, or Eliza may have been a brand snatched from the burning.

On September 17th Nancy Watkins has new cause for worry:

> I cannot believe Bagby's company was taken from the Batteries, but the possibility of your being sent off to Charleston with the Infantry has caused me a great deal of uneasiness. . . . Lue will not start to school till next Tuesday; the cars are so crowded with soldiers—A. P. Hill going to Tenn.
>
> Aaron [Negro] went for Dr. Wilson yesterday to see Abel [Negro]. I am afraid he has Diptheria. . . . Catherine [Negro] is improving again, walks about the house. . . . The other negroes are not allowed to see Abel. Tom Carrington has three cases & Dick Watkins four. . . .
>
> Jim Shotwell told Mr. Harris that Lila Goode saw you in Weldon—but I know if it was true you would have written by her. I will not believe it till I hear something more definite. . . .
>
> September 21—Friday when your two letters came and I knew that you were gone, I felt as if my cup was filled to the brim—that the last bitter drop had been added—that I could not live—and then I began to think how wicked it was to indulge such feelings of my ingratitude to our kind Father, who has so tenderly watched over you since you joined the Army, and I was grieved & humbled that I

had ever been tempted to doubt his mercy. . . .

Lila Goode gives a glowing description of the fine appearance of your Regt.—of the great contrast between the 4th & 26th. The men in the 4th all looked bright & cheerful & willing to go. She says Col. Goode told her to persuade you to run the blockade and come home from Weldon and he would not report you absent, but you would not consent to it.

I know your reasons were good, though, and feel certain that you were right. I love Col. Goode for his kindness to you & the disposition which he shows of favoring you all he can. Are you sorry now you did not accept the place he offered you some time ago? I have been tempted to regret it, but as you did what you thought was your duty it will all work right, I hope. . . .

J. Amber was at Church & Aunt Judy and I felt very much like giving him a piece of our minds—it really frets me to see all the G's and so many other young men at home. I can't see a bit of justice in it. . . .

September 30--I was very much rejoiced to hear that there was little prospect of your being in a fight, & of your coming back in a few months to Chaffins Bluff, but Pa discouraged me by saying, "They don't know where they are going."

I have been thinking lately that if I ever got hold of you again I cannot be separated from you—so you had better not give me a chance. I don't mean that I would cut your foot off like that soldier's wife did at Chaffin's Bluff, but I think if I cannot keep you I will go along with you. You need not think I am joking either, for I will just tell you Darling I am getting desperate about you. I don't know how I am to stand this terrible war much longer. . . .

Minnie has got up & is running about in her gown. She says I may go with her to Charleston. . . . Mrs. Speed, Cousin Delia, Sallie Pettus & Martha Morton wear hats. What would you think to see me with a hat on? [Since her marriage she wore a bonnet.] You would think I was turning young again—well maybe I will have a hat too the next time you see me—it will not do to let all the old folks get ahead of me. Make haste Darling & whip the Yankees and come home. . . .

Nathaniel, on receiving her angry censure of the men staying at home from the army, evidently writes a rebuke, realizing perhaps that his own withers are wrung, since he had so long yearned for a substitute:

October 8—I am glad you gave me such a good talk about being so hard on the men who are at home. I do not know their reasons, but I know for the same reasons you might be at home now—but I will not abuse them any more as you say I must not—and I don't know but you may feel it your duty to come home, too, and I hope

you will if the war lasts much longer. Even then you would feel that you had done your part, while many others have done nothing.

If you have any more chills I hope you will try to get a furlough and come home and stay till you are well. I am afraid having chills so much will affect your constitution. I think about you these cold frosty nights and do not enjoy my warm bed with Minnie nestling so snugly in my arms half as much when I think of my Darling sleeping on the cold ground without a tent, and perhaps not more than one blanket. . . . If you come home safe I shall be happy. I cannot desire more, and do not deserve so much. . . .

Cousin Isabel Venable has received a legacy from Scotland—one of her old Maiden Aunts has lately died and left her $15 000 in English funds. Are they not fortunate? There are two or three more old Maiden Aunts [surely an ideal predicament]. . . .

October 19—Mr. Hines [at Nathaniel's request] came here & preached after dinner to the servants. Preached in the weaving room so that Jenny could hear. She says she has been to preaching a great many times but never listened to it before—Mr. Hines' black congregations are the most intelligent looking I ever saw and pay more strict attention and enjoy preaching more than the white people. I think for a long time there has been a very interesting state of feeling among the negroes of this neighborhood.

As we shall see, fifteen years later some of these Negroes still remember Mr. Hines' preaching and look forward to their return from Tennessee to North Carolina where they can join his church.

"By the end of winter, if there are not bright prospects for Peace," Nancy writes, "I think you might come home if you can possibly do so."

November 2—Col. Baskerville & Cousin Dick Watkins stayed here last night and went with Pa to Court this morning. Cousin Abram came to breakfast, and they sat an hour or two after breakfast talking. I know you would have enjoyed being with them—three such smart men & so well posted. It was a real treat. . . .

November 5—I was very glad to hear that General Beauregard thinks the Yankees are doing us no harm with their batteries & Ironclads after all their labor & preparation for so long a time, and that they are becoming discouraged about taking Charleston. Everybody seems to think now that the ball is pretty well wound up in Va. and that the Yankees will not be able to do much more there, but that a great battle will be fought in Tennessee soon. Oh! that the God of battles may fight for us and if it must be—that it may be the last great decisive one.

Finally Nathaniel had made up his mind about the Substitute question once and for all and determined to stay in the army to the end:

November 16—You say you wish all efforts to get you a Substitute stopped, that you prefer remaining in the service if possible, and in your new position you think you can stand all the service that will be required of you.

If this is your wish & you think best I am satisfied and think it is all as it should be. . . . But if you should still find that you are not able to stand the service and think it necessary for the complete restoration of your health [it was by this time beyond complete restoration; he never fully recovered and died at 89] to come home—I then want you to get a substitute, and you must let me know and Pa can get old Bouldin. Pa is delighted that you have accepted the place of Ordnance Sergeant, he was very much disappointed when you refused it before—but I was not. I feel perfectly satisfied with whatever decision you make, knowing that you are a better judge of your duty than anyone else and whatever you feel to be duty you will do it. . . .

There is such a spirit of stealing & trading among the negroes now that I am afraid our negroes will be very much corrupted not having any white person to see that they are in place. . . . Pa says I must tell you that all of your debts are paid now except the Redd debt. . . .

Irving [Negro] wants your consent to his marriage, says he told you of it when you were here and you had no objections, but wishes you to say again.

Tom Carrington asks Charles Lewis 10 sheep or $400 for the young Taurus he gave him two or three years ago. Pa says two hard cases to lock horns. . . .

Nancy is alarmed to hear that her husband has been sent to James' Island—"I have always understood that it is the most dangerous place around Charleston;" but to her immense relief and probably to his, for the weeks in South Carolina had been grueling, by Christmas he is back near Petersburg, Virginia. "Old Adam is always anxious to know when 'Master is coming home,'" and Irving "says he will wait to get your approval before he can marry." Poor patient Irving got it.

Settled in his new quarters, Nathaniel writes January 4 1864:

We all here had a very quiet still Christmas & new year. Yesterday the citizens of Richmond & Petersburg attempted to give General Lee's army a new year's dinner, but it was almost a perfect failure—they did not know how much it takes to feed a large army, & consequently didn't provide half enough. Many of the soldiers got nothing—I got enough beef & bread to make me a light supper. Capt. Bagby's Company got one turkey, two or three cabbages & a few little things.

I think the whole effort was ridiculous; but would have been a success if it had been contributed for the poor of the cities.

I hope & pray that this may be a happy new year to you all & to our whole country--that God will soon restore peace & happiness to our people. . . .

Chapter III. Campaigns of 1864; Disintegration of the Home Front; Petersburg and Last Days on the Southside Railroad; False Hopes and Disaster January 1864 - April 1865

Near Petersburg, Jan. 5 1864.

I haven't been more troubled by anything yet, (I mean in a small way), than by the information that Riggins had been sent to the army. Since he had proved himself, & was getting on so well I felt perfectly easy about my affairs at home. . . .

I don't like your living [at Brookland] alone at all, & if no one can be gotten to take Riggins' place, I suppose the same old arrangement with Mr. Harris will be the best that can be done. . . .

The weather has been right cold & disagreeable for some time but we stand it wonderfully, & the men still seem to keep their health. The arrangement which has been recently made about sending out pickets (putting only the most trusty soldiers on pickets) has so far stopped all desertions to the Enemy--& we only have a few now to go home--not properly deserting.

In this prosaic note are several interesting implications. Nathaniel's sense of proportion is truer. No longer does he even think of substitution; and the qualification—"I mean in a small way"—shows that his farm worries, however acute and justified, are diminishing before more serious concerns, such as the ominous "arrangement" of only the most trusted pickets required to stop desertions from the Confederate Army. He writes calmly—"only a few now to go home--not properly deserting" but he is clearly disturbed. More and more desertions were to come in the next fifteen months. His change of mind and heart is not yet complete:

I wish you would get your Pa to try & find what price he could get for my two bay colts--Tom & Ellis. If affairs do not change by spring I know it will be absolutely necessary to press horses again, and much more closely than ever before; & if I find that there is any chance of having mine pressed I wish to sell immediately.

He is still haunted by his four thousand dollar debt to Frank Redd, who had not been accommodating about receiving Confederate money in payment. He very humanly wants to forestall further financial loss by confiscation. Earlier he had hated having his negroes impressed for work on fortifications at Weldon—more because he feared their being contaminated by outside influences than for any money

consideration—but he had agreed that it was only fair to take his turn with the rest.

It is another year, however, before he throws himself body and soul into the cause. On January 25 1865 he writes (my italics):

> I am sorry Riggins has again been taken away,—hope though they will soon send him back.
>
> *If they are absolutely needed I am willing for the Government to take my land & negroes & stock & everything I have but my wife and child.* Were it not for them the country would be nothing to me. . . .
>
> Give much love to all—& to the negroes. . . .

By this time he is so filled with revulsion at those who are greedily profiteering or deserting the ship with all they can salvage, that he throws all prudence to the winds. And as realization of the revolutionary change to come with defeat dawns on him, his allegiance to the Confederacy becomes unconditional and for the first time white-hot. He refuses to admit the possibility of defeat till the actuality silences him.

For the year 1864 only five letters survive—four of Nathaniel's and one from Richard. Though this winter was probably very much like that of 1862-1863, except much harder, this gap is regrettable, since there were crucial and brilliant battles between March and September—one of the intermittent stretches when Nathaniel's brigade was actively involved.

On March 9 1864 Grant received command of the whole Northern Army. Though at first it did not appear so, Lincoln had at last found the right general. Grant's plan to attack Richmond from several sides simultaneously was excellent, but execution was faulty owing to blunders of his underlings.

Sigel, whose assignment was the Shenandoah, was intercepted at New Market and routed. Fighting in the Great Valley was for awhile a serio-comic series of chases and counter-chases, as we shall find from Richard Watkins' letter to Nathaniel in September. Richard was a Cavalry Captain under Stuart and took part in this campaign.

In May Butler moved up the James River, taking City Point and Bermuda Hundred and sending out his cavalry to cut the Weldon Railroad, which connected Petersburg with the south. Petersburg was only sketchily protected, but for some reason Butler failed to attack. He managed to get as far as Drury's Bluff, opposite Nathaniel Watkins' old post on Chaffin's Bluff, only to be knocked out by Beauregard's counter-attack, which reduced the Army of the James to impotence for some time. Nathaniel Watkins, stationed at Petersburg, saw action here.

The most strenuous fighting, however, was by the Army of the Potomac around Chancellorsville in the "Wilderness" and down as far

as Cold Harbor, between the Chickahominy and York Rivers, only a few miles northeast of Richmond. The terrible losses at Cold Harbor made Grant revise his strategy and shift to the south of the James.

As we have already seen from his letters, Nathaniel had gradually learned that southern victories, even when they caused outcry in the North, failed to produce the negotiated peace for which he prayed. Again and again, in spite of discouragements Lincoln managed always to get new taxes and recruits; this was reducing Nathaniel to a sort of resigned fatalism. Even so, he was not aware of the full growth of determination in the North, so similar to the stiffening of his own purpose. Grant received unfaltering support in spite of the massacre in the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbor, where preparation for battle lasted for days, the actual fighting little more than an hour of slaughter. It was only a matter of time, and these months were a protracted death agony.

If his letters during this spring and summer are lost, he refers in retrospect to this period a year later, when he is moved from Petersburg to Hatcher's Run:

> March 18 1865—It is the first time our Brigade had had any time for drill since we left South Carolina. This shows how hard & constant our service has been.
>
> Just at this time, one year ago [more accurately, December 1863], while we were in South Carolina our Regiment numbered eight hundred arms-bearing men,—now we muster just five hundred, and this too after receiving a good many recruits. . . .
>
> Our Brigade has never faltered but once;--on the 17th of last June [1864], when entirely overpowered by a vastly superior force, and after having fought against large odds, with their picks & shovels in one hand & guns in the other for two days & nights without relief or cessation--their whole nervous system entirely broken down by fatigue & loss of sleep & food.
>
> Our men have, since the 15th of May—then months—with the exception of occasionally a few days—all put together not making one month—been under constant fire, sharp-shooting & shelling & field fighting, night and day . . . on half rations the greater part of the time; sleeping on their arms all the time in constant expectation of an attack;—without tents most of the time . . . and still those who are left (and it is miraculous that so many are left), are as healthy & hearty & strong, &, with few exceptions, as determined and defiant as ever. A few of them (mostly from those whose homes are entirely in the enemy's lines) have deserted to the enemy. . . .
>
> Those at home have no idea,—can't begin to form an idea,—of what our men have undergone. I write you all this, not to make you feel bad, but to make you feel more proud of our true Confederate Soldiers; & to make you feel more grateful to Him who has covered them with "His feathers & shielded them with His protection."

[This is the army of whose discipline and training he was almost contemptuous in 1862.]

Lest this seem like boasting, he at once disclaims any personal glory:

I, of course, in the discharge of my duties of Ordnance Sergeant, have been exposed to but few of the dangers and hardships which the other men have borne so nobly. . . .

During July, August, and early September Early and Sheridan skirmished back and forth in the Shenandoah, as Richard relates from Winchester September 10th:

Dear Nat: A long time has transpired since we interchanged civilities. What say you to a renewal of the acquaintance? Where are you? What doing? When about Petersburg I made several ineffectual efforts to see you and was always informed that you were down at the front, without being told at the front of what, or in which direction you fronted.

How do you like the War? What do you think of the fall of Atlanta? Why did you and old Bob Lee allow Grant to get possession of the Weldon Road as soon as we left Richmond? Is not that your best route home? Are not the Yanks between you and your Dulcinea del Toboso? Are you blue, or are you in high spirits and "spilin' for a fight?" How comes on the "shakin' ager"?

We are having gay times over here. Have actually had three days of rest in succession and only three since reaching the Valley. Early has chased Sheridan and Sheridan has chased Early, and Early has re-chased Sheridan & Sheridan Early until they have stopped from exhaustion. . . .

Whoever thought when we were boys or even full grown men that we would live to see the day when the Union should be dissolved and when the Old School & New School [Presbyterians] should come together, and yet in our life time both of these events have happened. Do you begin to feel old? Are gray hairs appearing here & there? What do you think about in times like these? . . . Do you read books or only newspapers as I do and that occasionally?

Do you all intend to hold Petersburg, or will old Bob allow himself to be flanked out of it as Hood was? . . .

Suppose you have heard how the Yankees served me. They took all of my mules and horses and the greatest part of my negroes. I recovered the negroes but mules and horses still in the vocative. Have had to incur great expense in replacing them, and as a consequence entertain serious thoughts again of quitting the cavalry. Cavalry horses are enormously high. A good one cannot be bought for less than $2400 or $3000—I cannot afford to buy many more [this of course is inflation as well as scarcity].

It would distress you to see the ravages of war on this beautiful

> Valley. Our trials as Virginians have been great during this war, but we must bear them as best we can, always trusting in the Great Omniscient Deity who doeth all things well.
>
> Adieu—Yr. Bro. Richard.

Ten days later Nathaniel, just returned from a furlough, writes his wife that "the army all seems cheerful & confident,--none of the despondency I saw in the Country; but there are a good many desertions." On September 22nd Sheridan roundly defeated Early at Fisher's Hill; and later when Gordon, one of his officers, had a wonderful opportunity to surprise Sheridan, Early--"the Evil Genius of the Confederacy"--spoiled all. After Cedar Creek the Confederates lost control of the Shenandoah and Grant was one immensely important step nearer his goal.

Nathaniel as well as Richard was busy. In early October there was hard fighting near Petersburg "on our extreme left (Chaffin's Farm)—and also on our right ("Weldon R.R.)":

> We all had orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move at a moment's notice. I suppose it was that we might not lose army stores & trains in case Gen'l. Lee could not check the enemy & we had to fall back . . . there is great danger that we will be compelled . . . to give up Petersburg.
>
> Don't be uneasy or low-spirited. I think our matters are rapidly brightening again.

On January 8 1865 Dr. Burrows "took a very cheerful view of our affairs" in a sermon in Petersburg—so cheerful that even wishful thinking does not keep Nathaniel from knowing it is whistling in the dark. Against the capture of Mobile, "the desolated village of Atlanta, & the possession of the unimportant city of Savannah," he tries to balance the Confederate immobilization of some 72,000 Northern troops on the Red River; however, he admits "some gloomy, very gloomy features." The chief source of his gloom during these last months is not military defeats but moral disintegration; having become a dedicated spirit, he judges harshly:

> The greed of money which seems to have taken possession of our whole people, the levity & thoughtlessness of all classes, even among the soldiers, & the great wickedness of many of our officers and public men discourage me a great deal. I am glad to say that there seems to be a better spirit among our soldiers now, & desertions are much fewer & less frequent. . . .
>
> January 18--Well Fort Fisher is gone, & I suppose Wilmington too; but if the people at home will not allow every little reverse to make them despond & clamor for peace—if they will rouse themselves, & send out all able bodied men (thousands are at home now) & as many of the old men & boys as possible, & be in earnest about

> the war, and not do everything in their power to dishearten the soldiers & clog the efforts of our Govt. & Military Officers, all will go well yet. . . .
>
> If necessary, & if Gen'l. Lee thinks proper, give him an army of negroes--give him anything, everything rather than despond & be conquered.
>
> It all means nothing less than disgrace & subjugation & misery worse than a ten years war would be. I long, Oh so much, for peace--but I do wish that every man, woman and child in the South would forget to pronounce the word. . . .
>
> But the people in the country & in the cities, after giving their sons & friends, are so much afraid they will lose some of their ill-gotten wealth, & be forced to suffer a few of the hardships the army has been bearing for them for three years, are all clamoring for reconstruction emancipation & every other thing which is weak & treasonable. Of course if it continues, the army will take up the cry, the soldiers be demoralized, our cause lost, & all our sacrifices be for worse than nothing.

His views on negro troops I have already related. He does not believe in them much, but "is willing to try the experiment;" he feels that there has been too much delay, that the only way now is to fill up white companies with negro soldiers. Abe Daniel makes inquiries about being appointed captain of a negro company; however, this project like everything else seems to hang fire. "Of course I am not behind the scenes, & don't know the reasons for all this, which may be very good;" but he adds sensibly:

> The greatest objection I see to bringing negroes into the army as soldiers is the great probability that they will all run off, as many of our negro teamsters have already done.

Negro teamsters were not alone in running off:

> I believe our men now would prefer staying in the trenches to being relieved. I am sorry to say though that they are beginning to desert again. Last night three went from our Regiment to the enemy.
>
> I think this is due a good deal to the fact that the troops haven't been paid off for over six months, & also to the fact that since the Piedmont R.R. was injured by the heavy rains the already scanty rations were considerably reduced. All this is the fault of the Government & its agents; and unless the evil is speedily removed I fear the number of desertions will be increased.
>
> We have already lost many good soldiers, and as true men as ignorant ones could be expected to be.

All may yet be saved, with the proper will and morale:

February 4—I think more of Roger Gregory for his kindness & liberality to the refugees. All of our people ought to help them as much as possible—ought also to help the families of poor soldiers.

When our people forget their avarice & desire to accumulate money, our cause will be more apt to prosper.

On January 29 Alexander Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter, and James Campbell met Lincoln and Seward at Fort Monroe to discuss peace terms, returning to Richmond on the 5th of February:

February 7—I have seen no official report from our commissioners, but understand Mr. Lincoln's terms were unconditional surrender, abolition of slavery, confiscation of property & no amnesty to rebels,—the next best terms he could have offered.—The best would have been peace on our own terms.

All of our people now know what to expect, all now know that we have done all we could to bring about a peace by diplomacy, and this must unite us & make us in earnest. We must now do, what we ought to have done all along, put everybody in the field, negroes if necessary,—stop trying to make money—stop talking and thinking about peace,—and look to the God of Nations for strength & help,—and it will not be long before Peace will come. . . .

At least the army's spirit has improved:

The great & rapid decline of gold is having a happy effect. Also the apparent anxiety of the North for peace [this was a few days before the commissioners' return]. Desertions have almost stopped from our Brigade, & the Yanks are beginning again to come into our lines. . . .

At times he wearies of his exhortations, as on March 3: "But it is useless speculating—all we have to do is just to perform our own duty, faithfully & conscientiously, & encourage others to do the same, & trust the whole result to an all-wise & merciful God." But on hearing three days later of new resolutions passed in Granville he flares again:

I don't see how we think of mild resolutions when fighting a death struggle for life & all that is dearer than life. A man whom it is necessary to conciliate now, (I mean a man who lives in the South), had better be driven off to the enemy, or rather hung. But it is necessary to do more than pass resolutions.

The people must act, & if they will offer the government all they have in defence of their life & liberties, & force out all the able bodied men, & arrest & send back all deserters, it will do more than all the resolutions. . . .

Psychologically the most illuminating insight into a mind so overburdened with doubts and fears that shifting responsibility becomes

imperative is this passage two weeks before the end—also a high tribute to General Lee (however dangerous in implication) from a man intensely jealous of his own independence:

> March 22—I have such confidence in General Lee's integrity & ability as to be perfectly willing to place the whole power of the government solely in his hands, & dispense for the time with President, Congress, Constitution & all, if he should wish it or say it was necessary.
>
> I cannot say this of any other man in America or in the world.

Though Nathaniel's emotions and nerves were stretched taut during these final three months of the "cruel, unnecessary war," he of course had some moments of quiet and relaxation. While his letters (the only ones for this period preserved) focus attention primarily on the approaching collapse as he registers it, they are filled with personal detail, too. He tries to soothe his wife's fears by reminding her of their repeated compact to deliver a round unvarnished tale; peace of mind depended on straight talk between them—one explanation of the factual tone of most of their correspondence:

> January 8—I am sorry you allow Sam Graham's extravagant talk about their shelling the lines &c. to make you more uneasy & anxious than you were. Sam, you know, is famous for coloring everything highly, & speaking always extravagantly. Don't repeat this though.
>
> I always try to write exactly how I am situated, & hope you will always try & believe things are as I represent them.
>
> I did remember that we have been married seven years—but ah, three of them, how have they passed.

A week later the weather is so wet that hostilities on the picket lines are suspended by mutual consent—"in some places in our immediate front the lines are not more than 30 yards apart, & you can see the pickets on both sides all walking about out of their holes, & but for the intervening space apparently on perfectly friendly terms." There was distrust, however,—and probably fear of desertions:

> February 2—Some of them also went down to the picket line, not more than 40 yards from & in full view of the blue-coated rascals. The Yankees brought out a Brassband to play for them.

During these quieter months his mind turns to his family, still dearer to him even than a country in peril:

> Oh how intensely happy were we then [in the spring-time of our married life] with our beautiful little blue-eyed Charley. . . . Have we been purified & made better by these afflictions? —I feel, darling, that I have. . . .

> Daniel Booker says he would like for me to [go] home with him, if I didn't have so many good jokes on him; but I promised him I wouldn't tell them to anyone but you. . . .
>
> I am glad Minnie has a will--it will not make it more difficult for you to manage her, if you are firm & decided . . . don't make too many points with her—and learn her to govern her will: & she will make a good useful woman. Her will, when she learns to control it, will become energy.
>
> Ten barrels of corn & five bushels of peas was a pretty heavy doctor's bill, as those articles sell here now; they would bring about $1000, but this is less than $75 in gold. I wish all of our dealings could be in this way—that everything could sell again at par. I am glad my colts look so well. . . .

He has been supping on rice "cooked by Dr. Flournoy"--at least filling. But Sister Susan sends a box "fitted with sorghum cakes, pies, hot-bread and biscuit, two large hams, stewed fruit, vinegar. . . . I hardly feel right receiving so many & so much good things."

The citizens of Petersburg, where flour was now $1100 a barrel, were all this time naturally apprehensive that Lee intended to give up the city. "The old Gen'l. himself looks as calm & untroubled & meek & unconcerned as if nothing extraordinary was going on around him. To see him is enough to inspire confidence in the heart of the most timid." During January and February Nathaniel was frequently in Petersburg for church services, browsing through music and book stores, paying visits. Taylor and Bella Venable Martin from Granville were there, and Lucy Watkins planning to marry Eddie Goode:

> I heard Lucy Watkins sing "The dying Soldier"—it was beautiful, also "The Vacant Chair" & "Take me home"--both very pretty. Some of the others I know are pretty; "When I saw Sweet Nelly home" is. Lucy sings beautifully I think. . . .

He was supplying his wife's young sisters with sheet music of these popular songs, and spent vexatious weeks trying to get someone to take back to Granville a guitar he had bought for them.

In February and early March he is deeply troubled by Stephen's disappearance from Weldon, where the army had impressed him for work, and by Grandison's behavior. This news and little Minnie's severe attack of measles intensify his desire for another furlough, but he is becoming more resigned:

> March 10—Don't you wish I was in the Granville Grays now? I could spend most of my time at home. But as long as old Bob Lee feels that he can't get along well without me, I shall try to stay cheerfully & contentedly, however hard it may be.

Four days later a brief, hastily pencilled note tells of marching orders; his brigade is moved to Hatcher's Run on the Southside

Railroad. He takes this calmly, perhaps to spare his wife, more probably because he has so long accepted the precarious position of Richmond and Petersburg that he does not suspect the near approach of the time when Lee can no longer withstand Grant's pressure. Everything now is unconsciously ironic:

> But when we got here, & saw how nice & still & clean & quiet everything is, most of us would be just as unwilling to go back to the dust & dirt & mud & heat & cold & sharp-shooting & shelling of the Trenches. . . .

He runs into Blucher Dick Watkins and is reproved: "He replied that he & I ought to be too good presbyterians, from our raising, to fear anything in this world." In this brief interval of relaxation he takes occasion to write the long letter retailing proudly the achievements of his Brigade, ending:

> I frequently look upon the men who have gone through all this, cheerfully & uncomplainingly, as many have, with wonder & admiration. God grant that these men may never be the slaves of miserable Yankee tasksmasters; but may speedily be a pure & free and independent nation, enjoying the liberty which they have by His blessing so nobly won, & ascribing all the glory to Him.—I believe this will be. . . .

Unfortunately, he never rises to that magnanimity toward his enemies found in some men on both sides--partly because, except for prisoners of war, he actually came into little contact with northern troops.

> We hope this will be the last campaign, & that we will soon be able to come home to our loved ones. . . .

It was the last campaign; within three weeks he was home--but not as he hoped to go.

There is hot skirmishing around Petersburg, and Nathaniel, not realizing how soon it will spread, points out that again "have we been providentially brought out from fighting to a place of comparative safety." On March 25th General Lee chose Gordon for a daring attempt on Grant's line of communication with his base at City Point; but at the critical moment the supporting troops failed to appear and the prospect of a brilliant success vanished. Sheridan arrived from the Shenandoah Valley, and Grant's final trap at long last was sprung.

Nathaniel's last war letter was written in haste in pencil March 27 1865:

> About dusk that night the Yankees broke through Gracie's picket lines to the left of ours & Col. Goode withdrew our Regt., which was all on picket, to prevent being flanked. The next morning (Sunday) our whole Brigade marched down to re-establish the lines, but found that the enemy had retired, so we all went back to

old camp right much broken down. . . .

I made a long report of the ordnance stores (this morning was just getting ready to write to you when the drum again be "long roll," & in five minutes we were off again; & I am now ting . . . in the pines just in rear of our pickets. . . . The Ch Cavalry is camped about a half mile from where I am now, & Daniel & Henry Morton have been to see me. They said Hen Watkins was anxious to come. . . .

All the success of our troops (& it was splendid in Saturd fight near Petersburg was spoiled by the misbehavior of som the troops—our loss was very heavy—mostly on two Brigades our Division—Ransom's & Wallace's (Evans' old Brigade). T were sent down from here the night before the attack to assis it. . . .

God has dealt with us very mercifully. . . .

Grant broke through to the Southside Road, and Petersburg fe Richmond, evacuated on April 2nd, fell the next day. On the 8th Confederate supply trains were seized by Union Cavalry. When tioned afterwards about his strength by General Meade, Lee ans "At no time did my force exceed 35,000 men during the final ca against Richmond and Petersburg." The army marching out of t two cities had dwindled through deaths and no doubt desertions t 26,000. After the six day retreat 8,000 were left to surrender o April 9th with Lee at Appomatox Court House, among them an or nance sergeant named Nathaniel Watkins.

At least it was finally over and there was nothing for Nathanie do except make his way on foot thirty miles to Charlotte County, where at first his Aunt Jane Marshall, Mildred Morton Watkins' sister, failed to recognize him as her nephew. A daguerreotype shortly after shows what the war had done to him. Gone is the s slightly dandified soldier of the photograph taken in Richmond in and in its place what looks like the wreck of Thomas Carlyle. B rowing a horse from Aunt Jane Marshall, Nathaniel rode home t Granville County, North Carolina.

PART THREE: --- AND PEACE

Chapter I. Impact of Defeat; Fate of the Negroes; Life in Granville Resumed; Bankruptcy and Politics 1865-1869

On June 2nd 1865 Henry Watkins Allen spoke to the people of Louisiana from the Executive Office in Shreveport:

FELLOW CITIZENS,—I have thought it my duty to address you a few words in parting from you, perhaps forever. My administration as Governor of Louisiana closes this day. The war is over, the contest is ended, the soldiers are disbanded and gone to their homes, and now there is in Louisiana no opposition whatever to the Constitution and the laws of the United States. Until order shall be established, and society with all its safeguards fully restored, I would advise that you form yourselves into companies and squads for the purpose of protecting your families from outrage and insult, and your property from spoliation. A few bad men can do much mischief and destroy much property. Within a short while the United States authorities will no doubt send you an armed force, to any part of the State where you may require it for your protection.

My countrymen, we have for four long years waged a war, which we deemed to be just in the sight of high heaven. We have not been the best, the wisest, nor the bravest people in the world, but we have suffered more and borne our sufferings with greater fortitude than any people on the face of God's green earth. Now let us show to the world, that as we have fought like men—like men we can make peace. Let there be no acts of violence, no heart burnings, no intemperate language, but with manly dignity submit to the inevitable course of events. Neither let there be any repinings after lost property—let there be no crimination or recrimination—no murmurs. It will do no good, but may do much harm. You who, like myself, have lost all (and oh, how many there are!) must begin life anew. Let us not talk of despair, nor whine about our misfortunes, but with strong arms and stout hearts adapt ourselves to the circumstances which surround us.

It now rests with the United States authorities to make you once more a contented, prosperous, and happy people. They can within five years restore Louisiana to its original wealth and prosperity, and heal the terrible wounds which have been inflicted upon her—so great are our recuperative energies—so rich is our soil—so great are the resources of the State! Our rulers have it in their power to dry the mourners' tears—to make glad the hearts of the poor widow and the orphan—to cause the past in a great measure to be forgotten, and to make your devastated lands "to blossom as the rose." . . .

. . . .

Refugees, return to your homes! Repair, improve, and plant. Go to work, with a hearty good-will, and let your actions show that you are able and willing to adapt yourselves to the new order of things. We want no Venice here, where the denizens of an unhappy State shall ever meditate with moody brow, and plot the overthrow of the government, and where all shall be dark and dreary—cold and suspicious. But rather let confidence be restored. If required,

> let each and every one go forward cheerfully, and take the oath of allegiance to the country in which they expect in future to live, and there pursue their respective avocations with redoubled energy, as good, true, and substantial citizens. . . .

As for himself: "I am of the proscribed. . . . I go into exile not as did the ancient Roman, to lead back foreign armies against my native land—but rather to avoid persecution, and the crown of martyrdom." Though seeing himself a little romantically as a Coriolanus without the tragic flaw, Allen is unquestionably sincere and thoughtful and deeply moved here. Whether he should have stayed to face imprisonment is purely speculative; ten months later he was dead in Mexico City. And the people of Louisiana remembered him with affection and grateful respect for all he achieved during his brief period as their leader. It is perhaps as well that he died when he did, for his expectation that the United States authorities would restore Louisiana within five years was sanguine.

Allen's first cousins in Virginia and North Carolina did not rise so magnificently to the occasion, but in a dazed way they pick up their lives as well as they can. After putting down Nathaniel's last war letter and remembering what happened at Appomatox Court House ten days later, one listens as in the great silence following a violent thunderstorm for the first resumption of normal sounds. There is literally a silence; communications are broken and confused for some weeks. As Patty hastens to assure Nathaniel June 24:

> We were so glad to hear from you all by Douglas & you may be sure I would have written if I had known that there was the remotest chance for sending a letter. I have thought of every way to get a letter to you & have concluded at last to write & try to get it to Aunt Fannie's for Tom to carry, as I hear he is warming over his broth.

"The wheat crop in this country," she goes on, "is a complete failure," and everybody is much too busy for visiting. All is confusion, much of it distressing:

> We have not been disturbed any lately by the Yankees, though we have a guard stationed at the Court House all the time. The negroes keep up a great commotion though, getting their families together, & some going off & some coming to get homes & some people driving them off, so it is the common topic of conversation.
>
> Four of Mr. Redd's who went off at the first he will not allow to come home, & he advised another woman the other day to go off with her husband as he could not allow him to come here, so she makes 5—two of them men.

This husband of one of his own ex-slaves clearly belonged to a

neighbor, and much of this commotion seems to be owing to the natural desire for husbands and wives to live permanently together, instead of the old arrangement in such marriages of weekly visits. Patty's brother-in-law, George Redd, owned about thirty-five negroes, of whom these three women and two men went or were sent away. If the situation at times seems to be "sauve qui peut" we must bear in mind that in this chaos food and shelter and clothing become paramount concerns, and men naturally think first of their own families, especially since the military ratification of the Emancipation Proclamation absolved many responsibilities along with privileges of ownership.

Patty hastens breathlessly on to other topics:

> [Mr. Trippe's Father] says that Johnson makes a better president for the South than Lincoln would have made, as he knew the nature of the negro better.
>
> The Charlotte people have not been disturbed as the people have in this county & now they are having tournaments & balls up there. It sinks my spirits to hear about it. . . .
>
> Brother [her half-brother, Edwin Edmunds] sent off some of his negroes as he had nothing to feed them. John & Bet lost nearly everything & so Brother has to feed them & Hal out of what little he has left. The men around here have all taken the oath. . . . Mr. Booker has gotten rid of nearly half of his negroes & several of Dr. Eggleston's have gone. I could write you a book if I could just untangle it all.
>
> We haven't heard from Sister [Betsy Watkins Ballantine] except through Mrs. Whittaker, who writes that they are all rejoicing over peace. . . . Ma says I must tell you that the vandals took every fowl Sister Maria had, one drake one gander & three peacocks.
>
> Tell Nannie I made Mr. Redd a whole suit of clothes out of some thread cloth Sister Sue had. Coat, pants & vest. . . .

Elisha and Betsy Ann Ballantine are now living in Walnut Hills, Ohio, and Betsy Ann writes to Patty from there July 29:

> I write now to you, for I am so anxious to hear from dear Ma and all the rest of you I don't know what to do. I think of you day and night and wonder why I don't get a letter from some of my sisters or brothers. I am sure you would write if you only knew how anxious I am for a letter. Fanny Hundley [Brother Edwin's daughter] wrote to me the first of June and that is the only letter I have had since the war closed. . . . I am distressed to think I can neither come to see Ma or hear from her.
>
> Do my dear Sister sit down and write to me as soon as you get this and tell me of my dear relatives and acquaintances in Prince Edward. I love them all and feel very much alone in the world since I have been so entirely separated from them.

Last week we were all together here. Henry returned from India last April on account of his wife's health. . . . Henry is now preaching in Marietta. He was very anxious to take me to Virginia to the old home to see you all, but we were too poor. . . . Mary often wishes for you and says you feel almost as near to her as one of her sisters. . . .

I have heard of the death of two of Brother Nat's children. You don't know how tenderly I feel for my brothers and sisters when I hear of their afflictions. You know I am the oldest child and nursed the younger ones so much that they seem nearer to me than brothers and sisters, almost like my own children, and Dick & Nat lived with me too.

Dear Patty do write to me, the burden of my thoughts is a good long letter from you or Sue or some of the dear brothers. All here send lots of love to Grandma & all. . . .

But two weeks later she still has not heard and writes pathetically to half-brother Edwin:

I have written to Ma, Sue, and Pattie but have not had a line from any of them or from any of my brothers since the close of the war. . . .

My love for every one of you is the same it always was, and I can't think that the feelings of any of you are changed towards me. . . . [None the less, this is what is bothering her.]

I thought that after the war closed everything would come down in price but in this I have been mistaken. It takes a great deal to live here and with a small salary we have to economize as much as we can, but we have every necessary thing, but can't live just as we used to do. I do not feel like murmuring. In God's time all will be well. He is doing this for our good, if we only trust in Him and keep near Him. . . .

Our Washington friends write to us . . . but so long as I can't hear from my own people I grieve and feel lonely. . . . I shall never forget the kindness I have received from you and the pleasant visits I have made you. . . .

Mr. Ballantine was in ill health again and once more they were forced to live on a parson's salary. From their subsequent behavior and Patty's warm nature, it is impossible to believe that Betsy Ann's family were deliberately uncommunicative. But the Ballantine story will be resumed later.

On August 29th comes the first word from Richard, now back at Oldham in Prince Edward:

I rode out this morning and was agreeably surprised on my return to find Uncle Adam [negro] sitting at my kitchen door. . . . Lieut. Trippe & I reached home in due time from N.C. and all my

horses were saved, excepting one of Mr. Redd's lost at Aunt Nancy's. . . . Was delighted on my return to find that Mr. Redd [Susan's husband] had not suffered at all from the Yankees and that Ma had actually not seen more than one or two.

Everything at Mr. Redd's goes on as if there had been no war. He has an excellent crop and is altogether one of the most remarkable men of the age. The equanimity of his temper seems not at all disturbed by anything that has happened.

Brother Edwin not so fortunate. He lost considerably and his negroes much demoralized. A goodly number have left him and so with Henry. I have not as yet made them a visit and cannot particularize the negroes that have left. . . . The Yanks had taken all of our meat excepting four pieces and all of our fowls except a goose & a peacock & they wouldn't mate. . . .

If you and Sister Nannie will come over now you will find us in a condition to reciprocate your kindness & hospitality to me, at least in a measure. Tell Mr. Daniel too that I have a large house & nothing would delight me more than to have it filled with himself & his family. And if on being told this the old gentleman laughs dryly and remarks that he is getting too old to come so far, just tell the girls if they will come I will give them the biggest frolick that the times admit of. . . .

The Yanks have us completely subjugated. All of our public places garrisoned with negro troops. And our people willing to submit to any degree of debasement & degradation. Farewell. . . .

Company 'K' is going to have a big tournament near Mount Pleasant on the 7th September next. All of you respectfully invited to attend.

But all did not show Mr. Redd's equanimity; also all did not have Mr. Redd's (temporary) luck. Brother Edwin, Patty writes a few days later, "has broken a good deal & is very low spirited;" he was hardest hit and his son Henry Watkins Edmunds was still having abscesses from around his war wounds:

The Prince Edward Cavalry [Richard's troop, originally formed during the Revolution by Captain Thomas Watkins, and sometimes called during its Civil War service "the Watkins troop"] are to have a grand tournament next Thursday about a mile & a half from here. The people are very much opposed to such a thing just at this time, but everything gives way to the soldiers. Mr. Redd & Brother Dick are both managers. The whole country seems to have given up to frolicking to levity & gaiety. It is real awful to think of.

The crops of corn around here are generally very fine. The wheat very poor. The negroes as "free as air." . . . Always take care of your Tobacco, it is the only thing now that is worth anything. . . .

"Everything at Mr. Redd's goes on as if there had been no war." Clearly this was not everywhere true even among members of this family; yet the initial reaction to the abrupt ending of war seems to have been refuge so far as possible in old habits and routines of living and a desperate gaiety. These people, as in cases of severe nervous shock, do not for some time fully realize the extent of the catastrophe which has overtaken them. Like a delayed reaction, the political and economic deterioration of the South is not really apparent for several years. The seventies will show the full ebb of their fortunes and the full weight of Military Occupation.

A surface gaiety, which so disturbs Patty, does not conceal early forebodings and signs of disaster. Richard writes a long letter to Nathaniel January 25 1866:

> This letter paper is too small for my purpose. I feel tonight like sitting down and having a long foolscap talk with you and Sister Nannie. I have been always attached to you both, but tenfold more so since my last visit to North Carolina. So warmly & tenderly did you receive me & sympathize with me in those dark, sad days—
>
> Gloom and sadness still rest heavily upon me, for I see nothing in store for our poor country but cruelty and oppression, and when I look upon my little children, all well and cheerful and happy, chatting merrily around the bright fire and enjoying the comforts of home, the question constantly presents itself, how long will this be so; what is in reserve for them? What trials have they to encounter? But one resource is left us, to trust in God & quietly await the developments of his Providence. I still pray & trust that he in his own good time will (perhaps in the way in which we least expect it) deliver us from our Oppressors and restore to us our rights and liberties.
>
> I see that whilst a majority of the Yanks are still wild with fanaticism & with the spirit more of devils than men are crying for blood, yet that to one and another of their leaders there is a lucid interval [is this a conscious echo of Dryden's immortal phrase?], for even Henry Ward Beecher in a public lecture declares himself opposed to the execution of President Davis & says that now is the time to heal & not to wound. Jim Lane, too, of Kansas can see no reason why men in Connecticut and Pennsylvania can advocate negro suffrage for the South & yet be unwilling to grant it in their own states. 'Tis a new era in Jim's life when he begins to cast about for reason & thinks of justice.
>
> I have not yet learned to admire Andy Johnson or to regard him as a friend of the South. It is no easy matter for the leopard to change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin. Perhaps I would feel better & more inclined to trust him had not Cousin Abram Venable given me such an insight into his character and early training [on all political matters Cousin Abram was the family oracle]. Johnson

is devoid of principle and may at any moment throw his whole power and patronage on the side of the Radicals. What hinders now his granting general amnesty and full free pardon to all? Nothing but his meanness and timidity.

And you have had an impudent letter from Sarah Skinner [from Massachusetts—his wife's first cousin]. Tell her that if she is so anxious to educate the poor freedman there is an opening right here. One of my freedmen will give her her board if she will live in his family and educate his children, and quite a comfortable negro cabin he lives in, too. And in addition to that she may on Sunday go anywhere on my plantation out of sight of my residence and lecture to as large a crowd as she can call together. There is an old field between my house & Col. Dupuy's admirably adapted to the purpose. Now here is a wide field for usefulness and glory, an opening for Sarah if she will only avail herself of the offer.--As poor Tom Daniel used to say, Why don't she come along? . . .

Enough of politics. . . . If I can sell my plantation and accept of your offer both of us can be more comfortable. Instead though of my buying the half of your land, would it not be better for you to sell and buy the half of mine? I have quite enough house room for both of our families until times become easier. And by this arrangement I could continue to practise Law here where I am known.

John Knight and I are practising in partnership. We bring a good many suits but not a client has paid us a dollar yet. The fees are charged and we have to take trust for pay. Never in my life before have I been in such straitened circumstances. With nothing to sell from my plantation and not a dollar coming in from my profession were it not for the Law I hardly know what I should do.

Many of our people are in favor of repudiation of old debts. I hope to be able to sell property to pay all mine off before this comes, for I fear the temptation would be too great to avail myself of it. My debtors have already repudiated. I lost three thousand dollars for property which I sold in Prince Edward Courthouse in 1858 by my debtors becoming hopelessly insolvent. This in addition to my negro property & other things makes my losses by the war very severe. But this is nothing to the loss of my liberties & rights.—

In the financial and political despair, feelings were too much exacerbated for Miss Skinner's well-intentioned offer to teach ex-slaves to meet a propitious response. Richard Watkins, whose profession brought him into daily intimate contact with the law, illuminates far more the political situation than Nathaniel, still exclusively a farmer, who answers the above letter from Granville:

I believe it does us good to tell one another of our poverty or of our straitened circumstances;—not so much that "misery loves

company," as that each one of us is apt to brood so much over his own troubles as to think after awhile that he is worse off than anybody else, and to become a little selfish in his troubles. I know it is so with me.

I am glad you are practicing law again, even if it doesn't pay you in cash; but think you would have done better with no partner. I would engage in school teaching immediately, if I didn't think that one year's conscientious performance of its duties would kill me.

This is an extravagant remark, but he was an excellent teacher largely because he was extravagantly conscientious, having finally taken too much to heart the stern advice of his father years before: "When you take hold of any subject, never rest satisfied untill you can so communicate your knowledge to others as to make them understand your views:"

As it is, I am trying with the assistance of eight or nine lazy freed men to dig my living out of Mother Earth; and am getting on tolerably well so far; but have no faith in the experiment: have all of my old hands except the three boys who left me last summer, and matters go on more smoothly & they work better (when I am watching them) than I expected. I work very hard myself, but can't stand it long.

Our cows are our only source of revenue, and Nannie is the monied man of the firm; she carries on a weekly trade with Mrs. Graves & has made enough money to buy a box of matches, a pound or two of copperas, & 20 yds. of cotton cloth. I forgot the sorghum which I made last fall, by retailing which I occasionally become the proud possessor of a greasy green-back 50 cent note, for which I am dunned in less than two days by some impudent "freedman" who has been doing a job of work for me.

With all of this I could be as happy as ever if I only had a country—if we were only independent & free. I keep better satisfied by trying to forget that I have not. I take no papers, & don't read any when they are sent to me sometimes by my kind neighbors. One hour's reading of politics makes me miserable for a week, & as I have nothing to sell I am not interested in the "prices current." I have determined lately to take the North Carolina Presbyterian (our church paper), but it makes my blood boil to read that. As we are sometimes scarce of wrapping paper, I would like to subscribe to old Father Converse's [the Christian Observer] & get him to send it to me blank—that I might help the paper, & not be tempted to read it.

I am poorer & prouder than I ever expected to be.

Nannie sends Sis Mary a piece of my winter suit,—homespun. She cut & made the entire suit, & gave it to me as a New Year's gift.

Not wasted were all those wartime hours first directing negroes at the looms and then weaving themselves. Nathaniel's and Richard's boiling point at this time was considerably lowered, but hardly more than was natural. Neither really nurses his bitterness, though both will have much greater cause for despair--not even the French during the generation after 1870 had so much—during the next ten years.

The central problem in the new economy of course is to devise a drastic new arrangement for labor. And the greatest loser of security, as he is the greatest gainer of liberty, in this process of readjustment is the negro. The ex-masters at first are largely preoccupied with their own losses, the basic necessity of providing for their own families during the economic earthquake. For a while in the general commotion neither victor nor vanquished pays any real attention to the negro--the forgotten man who six months before was the darling of the Northern newspapers. Richard voices understandable indignation that states like Connecticut and Pennsylvania are intent on negro suffrage for the South but not for Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Even Lincoln's great Proclamation was a reluctant, limited, somewhat illogical emancipation; and the vast majority in the North were afraid of the free negro, having no intention of granting him even economic equality on their own ground.

We have already heard about Mr. Redd's loss of five negroes and Brother Edwin's need to dismiss most of his because his own family is too hard hit to feed other mouths. Nathaniel has lost "the three boys who left me last summer," and finds the rest lazy; Richard too finds that "the freedmen do not work," and he has been less fortunate than his brother:

> All of my negroes left me except Tom. I hire five men & a boy. No good hands among them, a very slow team, yet the best I can get in the neighborhood.
>
> Our planters [this term is new to Richard, sign of a new class consciousness] have pretty generally secured their laborers for the year. None of them, however, seem to have any confidence in the negro. Beverly Scott, John Archer & Col. Stokes & a few others are making arrangements to get white laborers.

Many of the negroes who wandered away soon drifted back, but experiments with white labor continued; and of course, as we have already learned from Nathaniel, farmers were themselves working as never before. Patty reports the new attitude February 25 1867:

> Brother Dick has 14 hands & is going in for a big crop. . . .
>
> Cousin Margaret Morton has another boy, or <u>plougher</u> as Sammie calls him. . . .
>
> Mattie Watkins wrote to me that she could clean up her room & set table & bring in breakfast & her Ma thought she was a first rate maid, said her Ma cooked sometimes & her Pa cooked one

breakfast, but Brother Will has a cook now. He said Mattie helped milk every time. . . .

Nathaniel is working side by side with his freedmen:

> Yesterday morning I turned out all hands from old Phoebe [negro] down to William's boy [negro], took Brown & Austin & Kitchens and Beverly [negro] & Tom [negro] and made a push to cut my tobacco before frost—did a heavy day's work and by dark had it all cut, nicely stacked and covered.

Conditions seem to be even worse out in Tennessee, judging from this account--all the more callous in the midst of an affectionate family letter—of Nancy Watkins' half-uncle, William Read, March 10 1867:

> Oh the Freedmen, what troublesome concerns they are, doing badly here but we whale them now & then when they get above the Negro & make him one again. I think they will play out with us in a few years. Many of our planters are now saying this is the last year with them & the Yankee beloved negroe. I cannot say what I will do another year, may do what I have done this, but would prefer white labourers.
>
> How are they doing with you & how do my dear Sister & Brother get along with them? Better I expect than we do, as there is a greater demand for labour here & more proffitable perhaps than in your country.
>
> I sent down to Mississippi about the first of January for some, & they do better a great deal than my old ones; in fact all the old ones are gone but four or five, & the sooner we get rid of the old ones the better, & finally get rid of all altogether.

For several decades the great demand for labor had been in the cotton country, and it was only natural that more and more negroes should gravitate southward. Patty writes February 2 1870:

> Sister Sue some days quite well and at others quite unwell, but she keeps stirring. Yesterday she made two pots of soap, about 50 balls & she hasn't finished yet. She has two women, both new ones, but she seems to like them very well.
>
> So many negroes have left for the south that it is hard to get hands. Though there are a good many settled to themselves. . . . Mollie Watkins has only one woman but seems to get on very well indeed. I don't know what she will do when Emmie & Minnie go to School.

Richard the following October shows how swiftly the labor situation had changed within five years of the War's end:

> Seasons have been very favorable through the greater part of

the year and crops are generally quite good. Would have been very fine had the labor been equal to the seasons.

Labor, however, has rather depreciated and I think will continue to grow worse until white labor or coolies are introduced. Most of the steady negroes have settled to themselves, and men with large plantations who have rented freely to them, requiring labor in part pay, get along tolerably well, whilst those on small places like mine [smaller than Oldham, which he has been forced to sell] who are compelled to offer money wages alone must either pay very high prices or get unreliable floating laborers, those who move about from place to place and live mainly by thieving.

By 1872 even Mr. Redd, who suffered least from the War, is having trouble, as Susan writes:

Laborers are very scarce in this neighborhood. Dick has only one Man and a White Boy. Mr. Redd has a White Boy here and a White Man at Bush River & one at the Mill. I have never been better fixed in the house than now, have the same Cook I have had for two years past--an excellent woman, a very good able industrious White Woman & a Girl.

Of them all, judging by a number of letters in the late sixties, Nathaniel seems to have been luckiest with labor. Hard times would drive away some of the negroes from Brookland ten years later; but meantime all stayed but the three boys who left immediately. The "house negroes," as we shall see, were in the same intimate relationship as before. Record of his time-keeping for the "field negroes" hourly wages is among his papers, and if he still may have felt it novel and somewhat "impudent" of them to expect wages at all, he makes only one nostalgic reference to earlier days:

July 13 1868--Tom Carrington rode along the lane yesterday, and told Riggins that my farm was in a better condition than any he had seen this year except Dick Elam's, and was fully as good as his. I begin to think so myself, but could have had it in a much better condition if my laborers had been slaves [this is his only use of the word]. Hear from all sources great complaints of drought. . . .

If Richard, and probably Nathaniel too, let off steam over Miss Sarah Skinner's offer to teach the negroes just after the War, no one seemingly voiced anger to her; and she writes again from Massachusetts to Nancy Watkins ("Cousin Moderation" of school days) in 1867:

Last week Aunt Emily [Emily Howe Dupuy, Richard's mother-in-law] wrote of your visit to your sister Martha and other things, which has so revived old loves and recollections that I cannot forbear longer to keep silence. Can it be that it is more than seven

years since we parted in that bright spring morning? I can see you now with that darling rosy-cheeked Charlie in your arms, now an angel in Heaven. . . .

So your sister Martha has left you for another home. I well remember Mr. Morton as a man of sterling worth and firm principles--doubt not she will be very happy in her new relation, but how much she will be missed in her old home, though I must recollect that Millie and Lucy are young ladies now.

We had a most delightful visit from Aunt Emily, who left her cares behind and seemed, as mother said, like the dear sister who left [Massachusetts] more than thirty years ago. . . . Aunt Emily's visit and letters have posted us in the affairs and changes of that neighborhood [Prince Edward], but from your section I have heard but little of late. I suppose your cares are numerous and fear I may be asking too much to expect a letter from you, but dear Nannie it would give me so much pleasure to hear from you, to see your dear handwriting again. . . .

Despite defeat and loss and bitterness, Nathaniel—"poorer & prouder than I ever expected to be"—was also happier than he had been for years. He was out of the army and restored to his wife, children, and home. That there are several series of letters from him during this period—despite, as he says, "my great aversion to letter writing"—is due to his wife's periodic visits to Prince Edward. While she is away he writes twice weekly, as during the Civil War.

It is soon noticeable that he and Nancy remember their wartime resolve, if spared to each other, to lead better lives, to be less preoccupied with each other. There are many stories of their kindness; two instances are here by chance recorded. They are not in a position to give money (cash is virtually non-existent), but they take two young men, Austin and Kitchens into their home where Nathaniel tutors them to enter Hampden-Sydney Seminary. Julia Austin writes to Nancy Watkins August 6 1867:

My father, who is now an old man, by hopes sustained during our late disastrous struggle, finds himself so much reduced in circumstances as to be unable to meet my brother's expenses for the present year. . . .

I may not be permitted the pleasure of ever seeing you in this world to express my grateful feelings, but please accept for yourself and kind husband our grateful acknowledgements.

And in December 1867 comes a letter so touching that I give it entire, for the receiver is not always, like this, as blessed in spirit as the giver:

I feel it a duty to say something to you both this morning but I am unable to express the many thanks due you both, for your

charitable & Christian like care over my dear child. For this is pure charity, undefiled, & well pleasing in the sight of god.

Without money & without price.

I fear the burden is too heavy on you, though if you feel able & willing to bare it, god has promised where too or three agree in asking one thing It shall bee granted unto them. You have at least the praise of that number & you may feel asshured that you shall prosper in this life & have life eternal in the world to come.

As the session will bee over by the time this reaches you you will please give me a report of franks conduct at your house. Let it bee good or bad.

May the god of heaven bless you all, & may you all prosper in this life & eventually bee saved In sweet heaven whare you will bee amply rewarded for all your charitable & good deedes done on earth.

Respt. your unworthy friends,
Hestor Anne & C. M. Kitchens,
Pleas hand
Mr. & Mrs Watkins & family

This charity had certain practical advantages, since these young men helped Nathaniel on his farm along with the negroes, but he was the least Machiavellian of men. Kitchens, whose parents deserve so well, did not himself promise well, and Nathaniel's bulletins to his wife show exasperation:

> ---I tried to get Kitchens to tell me about the crops on the road & in Charlotte [he had escorted Nancy and the children], but he was entirely ignorant of everything; Minnie I am confident could have given more information. He was laid up yesterday all day with one of his headaches—drinking bone-set tea. To-day has gone to study. I begin to lose all faith in his ever making a preacher.
>
> ---Kitchens and Blanch [dog] doing well. Austin wrote in fine spirits, and speaks of going to Hampden Sidney next session.

Austin did go on to the Seminary, from which two years later he sends warm greetings to Brookland via Patty. And several years later Patty meets both Austin and Kitchens, "now mighty handsome," at Briery. Kitchens managed to survive and prosper without brains.

Apart from relatives and these young proteges, the most prominently mentioned in Nathaniel's letters in 1867-8 are Polly Graham and Eliza (the "my Eliza" of Nancy's war letters), the two negroes who virtually ran the household during Nancy's visits to Prince Edward and Charlotte. These letters are packed with family trivia and gossip (one serious scandal discreetly hinted); they give, however, glimpses of Granville rural life peacefully resumed, with little bitterness. Their constant theme is that of the war letters—Nathaniel's dislike of separation from his wife, who on this particular visit during July 1868

is with her Sister Martha, who had married Cousin David Morton of Charlotte:

---I don't know why it is, but I have never before borne your absence so badly. . . . Saturday early I footed it up to Waterloo for company & comfort. Lue said she has never seen me act so silly about you before, & your Ma seemed highly amused. Your Pa was in Oxford, and I rolled about & quarreled & complained about your leaving me . . . . I begin to feel stronger, and don't have my head-aches, and don't break down so soon or so completely when I work. . . . I have been deeply interested reading the Schonberg-Cotta Family. It is one of the best things I have read for a long time. . . .

---Darling how tired I am getting of this unsatisfactory, half-savage unchristian life of a Bachelor. I don't wonder what Brother David should almost smother Sis. Martha with kindness. . . . I often think if your visit there doesn't recall to your mind old scenes and times when we first met and first learned to know and love each other. There has passed twelve long years since:—and oh! how full have they been to me of love and joy and happiness!—and without which how could I have borne the cares and the sorrow!

If it were not for negro supremacy, for Yankee insolence and tyranny, for our poor insulted, humiliated and helpless country,--I could take my little family and be again, as I have been, happier by far than a man ought to wish to be in this world. Well! Maybe it is all right and best, but I can't think so—

---Had a very hard and fine rain Monday evening, and Hugh called in out of the cloud. Poor fellow! I felt so sorry for him. He stopped at the yard gate & asked my permission to come in, & when he came didn't offer to shake hands with any of us, nor did he when he left. He was perfectly sober, talked like a well informed gentleman & behaved very well. Talked with me all about the nice people of Prince Edward and Charlotte, & of the pleasant times he had there. I felt so sorry for him, couldn't help inviting him to spend the night, when he went off after supper with a torch to King's; but was glad that he refused. . . .

Nancy Watkins' message from Roanoke—"I want to see you mightily, now goodnight darling, I love you so much"--does not console him:

---I don't see how I can well make out much longer without you and the children. I must break up house-keeping and go up to board at Buffalo Springs during the summer, as Wm. A. Gregory has done, turn out and go around to see some of the young girls, or do something desperate.

I tell you what old Miss, I don't intend to stand this state of things much longer--it is worse than war. . . .

But things are picking up for him and some of his cousins seem as prosperous as in former days:

> Your honorable Lord and Master, since he has no one to exhibit before, is improving, growing meek and patient, "enduring all things." "Hoping all things." . . . It would do your heart good to sit in the porch here with me and cast a look over my corn field—it is a magnificent view, and enough to cure the blues in a man who has been on half rations of corn for three years. . . .
>
> I noticed Liza [negro] this morning actually putting butter in the pot, and I gave orders to Polly [negro] to use it in the place of lard. . . . Polly says she . . . has attended to the hen-house very diligently and counts your chickens every morning. Liza commenced dying your black hanks yesterday. . . .
>
> Went up to Tom Carrington's & Mr. Hines baptized their baby--named Clement. Lizzie was well again—sent a great deal of love to you. . . . Had a very fine dinner--Ham, mutton, chicken, all the summer vegetables in profusion & very fine . . . pickles & jellies,--two or three kinds of cakes & pies,—ice-cream & two kinds of wine. I thank you Madam, I did ample justice, but didn't disgrace myself. I suppose it was nothing uncommon there. . . . Was beginning to get tired of so much company, and though I knew I would be lonesome, I wanted to be alone some. . . .

The negroes move about in the old familiar pattern, sending messages to each other, even getting married in the dining room:

> ---Liza has been very busy over your hanks all the week,--they are still in the dye I believe, but she says they won't get black. I have never seen her show more anxiety to please, and to do things just as you order, and have them done when you are here. Polly too seems disposed to do everything just as you told her, but she needs a little pushing occasionally,—becomes too much taken up in her own matters.
>
> ---I read the message to Liza & Polly. They said you shall find everything straight. They send love to you & seem very anxious for you to return. . . .
>
> ---Luke [? negro man] came in last night & brought this note for "Miss Beller Moton," he seemed very proud of it & made me read it to Polly. Always write about Bella, he comes regularly to hear from her. . . .
>
> ---Mr. Hines married George & Sally [negroes] just before supper--it was the funniest wedding I ever saw. They made no preparation and had no company, but came in the dining room with two or three of the other hands & were married in about 5 minutes.

Not until two years after Appomattox does the full extent of the economic disaster begin to be felt. Patty sounds the first really

ominous note in a letter of February 25 1867 packed with miscellaneous news:

> It is said that Frank Wood is broken to smashes & has deeded all of his property to John A. Scott. Andrew Venable & the firm of Spencer & Venable too are said to be bankrupt. Andrew I understand has made his deed.

This becomes an increasingly familiar burden, and since relatives and friends were always quixotically going on each other's bond the failure of one member sometimes brought down a whole group like a house of cards. Often on such occasions the only answer was migration and a completely new start.

Richard and Nathaniel all this time have been swapping letters and worries and commiseration. Richard was trying to run a farm with his left hand and practice law with his right, only for the privilege of sending out bills which no one could pay:

> August 14 1867—From nine months practice of my profession have realized in money the enormous sum of Thirty Dollars, not enough to have paid my tavern bills, the rest of my fees amounting to a few hundreds, stand charged upon my books: the people have no money and I cannot press them for payment. . . .
>
> [My tobacco] was badly injured, mouldy, &c.: and instead of my receiving the promised five thousand from the proceeds I got the loan of Sixty Dollars to buy a little bacon with for my family. So you see my dear Brother that I am hedged in & wedged in: In short as Mr. Micawber would say, I must wait for something to turn up. And all that I can give you is the assurance that the very first money which I get from any source shall be applied to your relief. . .
>
> August 25—I sold my plantation a few days ago to Frank & George Redd [George is his brother-in-law] jointly for $12000 [most of it in that rare specie, cash]—and took in part payment your bond to Frank Redd. . . .
>
> Your bond
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Due Jany. 1862 | $3589.90 |
> | Int. to 1 Jan. 1867 | 1077.04 |
> | | 4.666.94 |
>
> All well. Mary joins me in love to you & yours & all the good people around you. "Poor free dis" without money, without clothes & without a home, but better than slavery. Yr. bro. Richard (freedman)

With this sale Oldham and the seven hundred acres of the original tract bought by Richard from the estate in 1858 pass out of the family for good—but not into the hands of George and Frank Redd, who get into their own financial difficulties before they can pay up—rather to Mr. Lash, who in turn "is broken to smashes" in the seventies. Nathaniel at least has the great satisfaction of having his debt no

longer to Frank Redd, who had consistently during the War refused Confederate money and who believed in pressure.

Richard was a creditor of another calibre, and the difficulties of these years drew the two brothers closer together, if that were possible, than ever before. Richard's financial crisis comes in the seventies. The bond Nathaniel could have paid, but he had to go surety for his father-in-law, James Daniel, who in his turn was surety for his brother, whose store, unable to collect any bills, was on the edge of ruin. Richard in February 1868 comforts Nathaniel, though the same sort of interlocking financial tangle is holding up his own money for Oldham:

> As to the little debt which you owe me, don't suffer a moment's anxiety about it. It shall never hurt you and I am willing to enter into any arrangement that you may propose concerning it. . . .
>
> As to my present condition, I am getting on so much better than I expected that I begin to hope to be able to get through with my indebtedness by the end of the year. Would have been able to breathe freely already but Mr. Clarke failed to pay the Messrs. Redd according to his agreement, & consequently they have failed to pay me.
>
> I have Frank Redd now in precisely the "fix" that he had you two years ago, and can hardly forbear to press him on account of his treatment of you. However if my creditors allow me will grant him indulgence.
>
> As to politics—We have organized the Conservative Party in this State and are in high hopes of defeating the Constitution which the Rads will submit this Spring. . . .
>
> And now my good fellow Cheer up: and when the fishing season comes on if I am not too busy will try to join you on Grassy Creek. In the mean time Bate a hole! Mary & her gal children Four in number join me in love to you & yours. . . .

Just as Richard determined at any cost to pay rather than repudiate his debts, so Nathaniel was determined not to take advantage of the bankruptcy law, keeping his lawyer brother elaborately posted. Finally in November 1868 a compromise is reached with James Daniel's creditors which may save him, Nathaniel, and Cousin Daniel Booker from complete ruin, at the heavy sacrifice of Waterloo and Brookland. Meantime Richard has instructed Brother William, the silent and unpredictable, to go down to Nathaniel's assistance:

> But on going last Monday to Charlotte Court I learned to my surprise that he had not gone.
>
> I hope no serious consequences have resulted from his failure to go. I was truly mortified at his indecision and write now to enquire what has been the result. Has your place been sold? Will it be sold? Please write me again.

> I did not think very highly of the compromise so far as it affected yourself.—I thought that you were yielding more than Mr. Daniel's creditors ought to have required of you. I do not see that it is dishonorable for a man to save to his family the little that the bankrupt law allows. Most certainly not, when the debts were not his own but were contracted by another.
>
> Of course, however, you will be guided by your own sense of justice & right. . . .

and then with characteristic generosity he offers Nathaniel refuge on his own farm on half shares of the crop; he will move to Farmville, which is more convenient for his law practice.

Nathaniel writes in answer a grateful and weary letter. Owing to complications the compromise with the creditors has fallen through:

> . . . and having waited for [Mr. Daniel] as long as I could with safety, and agreed too to the compromise merely because he seemed so anxious for it, and not because I thought it best for him or for myself:—he and I took advantage of the Bankrupt Act last week, and filed our petition through Tom Venable as our lawyer. Tom V. says he will now proceed as soon as practicable to have me sold out under the judgment. . . .
>
> I know very little about the matter and merely wish to pay off my debts, if possible;—to be released from all other claims, and to be able to go to work with some heart so that I may make something for my family.

Earlier he had written what he feared teaching again might do to him; now he has no choice:

> I expect to open a little school next year—wish to take 4 boarders and 4 or 5 day scholars. . . . My terms will be $180 a year board & tuition & $50 tuition for the day scholars. . . .
>
> I can't sit here idle, and I am going on just as if all the property was mine & I expected to keep it the whole of the next year.

Richard has done all he can in taking over the Redd bond—his till is empty; but he arranges matters with Patty, who is the only member of the immediate family now not completely stripped of money:

> You can then farm with Patty or rent her portion & in 3 years buy your whole place back again. I know you can do it. Try it. . . . Keep up your spirits in despite of Yankees & chills & fevers & creditors and Sheriff & Bankrupt Officers. . . .
>
> We are at present having a gay time here. Not an officer civil or military in the county except a clerk, he a miserable Yankee wretch who supplanted our old friend Mr. Worsham. Congress has removed all of our officers and men cannot be found who can take the iron-clad oath. We have no courts, no judges, sheriffs,

> magistrates or officers of any description; emphatically a free people & have been so since the 18th March. Our trust is in God & in him alone---

Nathaniel, too, runs into technical difficulties:

> It is just as I expected about the deed. . . . Tom Venable told me a few days ago that Betts (our Probate Judge) was unwilling to appoint anyone who could not use the County seal. Betts knew that everyone who could use the seal was either a Carpet Bagger or Scallawag, and that there was a small perquisite attached to its use. . . .

The South was under Military Occupation. This explains why bitter comments on the Yankees crop up again in the letters of both brothers.

Patty Watkins, who at first naturally balked a little at the idea of investing money in such seismographic circumstances, came through handsomely: "I wouldn't know what to do with the bulk of the money if I had it & it is safer in land than it could be any other way I think." And so, with the help of his Brother and Sister, Nathaniel managed to hang on to Brookland after all. At the crucial moment old Charles Lewis Read out in Tennessee, now seventy-five, came to the Daniels' rescue--one of his last benevolences to his fifteen children, for he died in 1869. He bought Waterloo with all its furnishings and 228 acres of the original tract, and deeded it to his daughter, Jane Read Daniel.

For another two decades Waterloo and Brookland would remain in the family.*

Chapter II. News and Visits from Indiana; Tribute to Robert E. Lee; Marriages and Deaths; Sons at Last for Richard and Nathaniel 1866-1875

After the narrowly averted disaster at Waterloo and Brookland in 1869, the family fortunes for a while steadied, though they imperceptibly drain away. All the farms have dwindled in size and are loaded with debt, and the people and the land are becoming more and more tired every year. But the family has not lost its vitality; the old cycle of marriages, births, deaths goes on. Visiting flourishes; there are the usual trips to Presbytery and Synod, even, as in more prosperous days, to various Springs, though now more specifically for health.

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*Reminiscences of these homes, and the simple, happy high-toned life there, have been written by Lucy Watkins (Mrs. J. F.) Morton, daughter of Nancy and Nathaniel Watkins.

Betsy Watkins Ballantine's fears that her family, embittered by the Civil War which left her on the opposite side, have chilled toward her prove unfounded, though there is one source of severe strain between her husband and her Brother Richard, who reveals it in a letter to Nathaniel January 25, 1866:

> Have received lately two letters from Mr. Ballantine. The first feeling after my heart, the second after my purse. Unfortunately for Mr. B. he could not find much for himself in either.
>
> I told him that I was not unmindful of the many favors he had rendered me, that in the past he had indeed stood to me 'in loco parentis' and in my affection occupied a place next my father; but had my father given countenance and aid to this cruel oppression of the South I would not honor him.—Nat, my liberties are dearer to me than my kindred.

The real explanation is not, as may appear, the bitterness of the defeat eight months before, but a personal transaction. When she married, Henry N. Watkins had given to his daughter, Betsy Ballantine, a few slaves; two of these, as we have already seen, the Ballantines took with them to Washington in 1848. But when in 1854 they moved to Bloomington, Indiana, they were in a quandary, because at that time Indiana allowed entrance neither to slaves nor free negroes. Richard, though he could not really afford them and did not want them, reluctantly agreed to take them over, giving his brother-in-law a note for most of their value.

Ill health forces Mr. Ballantine to give up his professorship at Indiana University; at the end of the War he is living on a small salary at Walnut Hills, Ohio. In these financial straits he thinks of Richard's note still due him, and the result is an impasse like that between the United States and Britain over the First World War debts. To Mr. Ballantine understandably a debt is a debt. To Richard it is outrageous that a man who has given his full support to emancipating other people's property should then turn around and demand payment for several of those emancipated slaves. Resentful as he is, practically bankrupt as he remains for years, Richard finally decides to make small payments on that note. Twenty years later the residue is cancelled at the instigation of Mary Ballantine, who on her first return to Prince Edward since the Civil War is shocked to see with her own eyes her uncle's dire poverty.

That this coolness between Richard and his brother-in-law does not extend to the rest of the Ballantines is clear from another letter of his to Nathaniel six months after the above:

> Ma received a letter from Sister [Ballantine] not long since. Fanny in very bad health and Sister not well since the death of Lizzie. Those two speak of coming this Fall and I very much hope they will.

This long anticipated and postponed visit finally takes place in the summer of 1869, as we learn from Patty's letter to Nancy Watkins July 14 1869:

> We were all so glad to see Brother Nat and I wish you & the children were with him. I am sorry he didn't see Sister. She staid such a short time that there was not much satisfaction in her visit. . . .

Patty was getting around more, and Susan too:

> September 6—Your letter was received while I was at Buffalo at Presbytery where I staid a week & since I got home there has been a very interesting revival going on at Mt. Pleasant, so that I really haven't had time to answer it & only snatch a few moments this morning. . . .
>
> Sister Sue started for the Alleghany Springs last tuesday & expects to be gone about 2 weeks or more. Mr. Redd went with her & returned friday. I do sincerely hope that she may be benefitted. . . .
>
> We got a letter from Sister, she was at the Indiana springs trying to cure her dyspepsia. Mary was still with her on a visit. . . . I want to see you all very much, especially the little stranger. Lue seems very proud of her namesake [Nathaniel's fourth daughter]. . . .

The following May Patty is off to Presbytery again, this time at Hampden-Sydney.

In October the dreaded diphtheria again strikes Richard's family. Nathaniel writes a letter of comfort, recalling the loss of Charley, his "blue-eyed boy;" and in appreciation Richard replies:

> Your kind letter of the 14th was received yesterday, and by the same mail a letter of like character from Sister and one from Anna Ballantine.
>
> 'Tis gratifying to find that they all point in the same direction, and that though we reside in different States and far removed one from the other, yet in times of affliction we turn to the same source of comfort and look forward to a joyful reunion hereafter. . . .
>
> Death seems to be reaping a full harvest this Fall.

He gives a long catalogue of recently deceased Mortons, Venables, Reads. But the greatest loss is Robert E. Lee:

> The shock was sudden & severe like that produced by the news of the fall of the Confederacy when he surrendered at Appomatox Court House. We had not even heard of his illness.
>
> 'Tis a sad affliction to the South but especially to our poor old State. And yet it seems to me that perhaps even in a worldly point of view 'tis better for the country and for the fair name of Genl. Lee that he should have died just now. His character might have

been marred by some act in after life. As it is, it seems to be as perfect in every respect as was that of Washington and as worthy of imitation.

What an effect it must have for years to come on our old Alma Mater. What an example not only for her students but also for her Alumni. [Washington College now becomes Washington and Lee.]

Nat, the longer I live the more fully am I persuaded of the truth of the proverb that "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Who would hesitate in choosing between the character, the name of Genl. Lee and the wealth of Astor or any other Yankee nabob? —Had I such a character the wealth of the whole world it seems to me would not purchase it. The Devil no doubt thought it a great temptation to offer the Saviour all the Kingdom of the World if he would fall down and worship him, but really it was equivalent to no temptation at all. . . . Yet all around me I see men, grown up men, some of them men of intelligence and education, struggling and striving for worldly wealth and honors as if eternal salvation & happiness depended on their acquisition.

Our dirty little State Constitution has divided each County into townships and filled each township with petty offices of various names. And the clamor for office in a court yard reminds one of the chirping of little frogs around a stagnant pool.

You had rather hear about crops than matters of this sort, and therefore will change the subject. . . .

In November Patty sends further news of the Ballantines: Sister Betsy's health is still poor; Mary has married the Rev. Henry Brown and moved to Wisconsin; Anna Thankful has just returned from a trip to New England and New York; Hal is "Engineering the Parks & gets 2500$." After her marriage in 1870 Mary Ballantine Brown, who with Hal was Virginian, born and brought up at Oldham, is so preoccupied with her new home in Wisconsin (where she learns to speak of "hired help") that for a while she drops out of the picture, her place being taken by Anna Thankful Ballantine. Though one of the "little Yankees" and unfamiliar with Prince Edward, Anna writes as frequently and warmly as her older sister to her grandmother and aunts, sending books for the children.

The most illuminating of the many comments on the Indiana nieces and nephews during this period is Susan's in January 1872:

Anna writes that Sister's health tho' not good is better than it was last Fall, the rest well.

Willie wrote from Boston (where he was spending his vacation) a rather high falutin' letter in a very illegible hand. They had sent one of Henry's a short time since and Ma had written for one of Willie's. . . .

Mildred Morton Watkins followed anxiously and affectionately every

move of these northern grandchildren whom she rarely saw, and some she never saw. And Susan's tart comment, while in her familiar vein, does not entirely conceal a faint jealousy, to be more apparent as time goes on, not of the Ballantine children themselves but of their opportunities and achievements. As the southern members of the family find life more precarious, the horizons for their young narrowing more each year, these northern cousins step out even from a poor parson's home into the prodigiously prospering and expanding Midwest and East, where ability and industry and a college education fling wide the doors to advancement and travel.

On the 4th of April 1873 when Betsy Ann Ballantine dies, her son Henry is traveling with his wife in Germany and Willie is in Beirut. Susan breaks the news to Nathaniel:

> She will be a great loss to her Family and we will all miss her old familiar handwriting, and good pious letters very much, yet she was such a sufferer for the past year or two, and had been through so many severe trials and afflictions I feel that it is almost wrong to grieve for her.

She encloses a letter from the Yankee brother-in-law which shows that personal ties have been unaffected by political or business differences:

> Your dear Sister is gone. My precious wife died this morning at 1/2 past two. . . .
>
> She suffered greatly, and though she seemed to rally somewhat some days, there was no real improvement. Nor was she herself entirely at the last—gave no parting words, no messages for any. But we knew her.
>
> Break this sad news to dear Ma. I wrote to Sister Pattie yesterday. Will you please send her word too; and to the rest. Anna alone is with me. Mary may be here. God bless you all.
>
> Your aff. Brother
>
> E. Ballantine.

Mary found it difficult to come all the way from Wisconsin since she had given birth to her first child six weeks earlier.

All these years Patty had been so closely confined, first at Oldham, then at Shenstone (George Redd's place), with her invalid mother, that she had few chances of meeting eligible young men; she was the only one still unmarried. And with her warm, affectionate nature she was made for marriage. Year after year she had chronicled the flirtations, the engagements, the weddings; now she takes the bit in her own teeth and defies her whole family. The affair begins unpromisingly with a trip for her health to Rockbridge Alum Springs, where only five years after the War people from North and South mingle in perfect amity:

. July 11 1870—I suppose you will be surprized to see my address but I haven't been well since I had that attack of Pneumonia last summer.

Fannie Watkins came with me but the dress & fashions so disgusted her that she has left me & gone home [this is the same Fannie who distressed Nancy Watkins by her strong criticism of all revival meetings in 1863]. Mr. Scott is here too & I really don't know what I would do if he hadn't come for among 100 people who soon expect to be 500 it is hard for one lone country girl to get along.

This is a beautiful place, everything is quiet & orderly as possible & the visitors mostly invalids. The whole country is represented from Massachusetts to Texas. I haven't formed many acquaintances as I never did know how to get along with strangers, but find some very pleasant ones. The time will hang rather heavily now since Fannie has left.

I went to the ball room last night for the first time. I don't think I shall go very often, though it is a very great place of resort for every body here. The round dances are the most disgusting sights I ever saw. I can't imagine how a lady a woman even would ever consent to dance it. The fare is very good at breakfast & supper, but the dinners are miserably cooked. I have a poor appetite caused I suppose by drinking such quantities of the water.

Please write to me while I am here & tell me all the news about every body. I haven't much to write here, for I am most of the time sleeping & dressing in my "old duds." . . . I must go in the parlor now & see some of the ladies. . . .

No wonder that "one lone country girl," deserted by Fannie, used to being surrounded by hordes of relatives, in this cosmopolitan crowd gravitates toward Mr. Scott of Charlotte County, whose family she has always known, some of whom indeed are connections. Mr. William T. ("Buck") Scott was well-born, much more well-to-do than her own impoverished family, a man of some importance and distinction in the State. There were only two things against him as a husband; he was well along in years and a sick man. Those were the reasons why Patty's mother, her brothers and sisters were against the match, but against it they very decidedly were.

Ailing Mr. Scott could not afford to waste time. Three months after the encounter at Rockbridge Alum Springs, Richard is writing Nathaniel:

Have hardly left space to tell you about Ma & Patty. They are in usual health. Ma looking a little older. Patty the very picture of health & high living. We hope that the worst is over with her disease. And rumor has it now that she & Buck Scott will be married soon. I know not whether it be true.

I can anticipate no good result from it except that it may perhaps bring you & Sister Nannie and your little ones over here for a while. Hope that if the first event happens the second will certainly follow.

But Patty's own mind is made up; she marries Mr. Scott. Susan, forgetting her own earlier domestic fervor, writes incredulously in January 1872:

Patty staid with us when Mr. Redd & Mr. Scott went to the State fair in Richmond and has not been down since. She wrote that she had a very quiet Xmas, spent most of it at home making a pair of pants for Mr. Scott!

Dick was over to see me this morning, has just returned from Richmond, where he had been sent by some of our citizens to try and get the Legislature to prevent the Court House being moved to Farmville. The new Court house is almost completed in Farmville, but it will be so far from this part of the County. . . .

This forlorn battle of the Court House ends of course with its removal, the death knell of the old Prince Edward court house village. the demotion and isolation of "this part of the County." Prince Edward Court House is now called Wordham.

The real basis for the family's objection to Patty's marriage, becomes clear in June 1872. Their worst fears are realized, though with much pain Patty gains also much happiness. Mr. Scott suffers from his first stroke two years after the wedding:

Mr. Scott was at Charlotte Court, is much better, can speak almost as plain as ever. Patty doesn't leave him even to go to Church. I feel very sorry for her. Mr. Scott requires so much nursing & she is so much confined. . . . I want to see you all & your little flock very much. Can't you all come this Summer and make us a good long visit. . . . I think you both might write sometimes to Your loving Sister,

Susan.

Deaths and births seem remarkably synchronized. Susan's letter to Nathaniel reporting Sister Ballantine's death in 1873 also reports that Richard "has a fine Boy, a month old, named Asa Dupuy." Richard no longer needs to joke affectionately and a little regretfully about his wife "and her gal children." Nathaniel, too, after the death of Charley, his firstborn, has had a string of girls; but like Richard's his last is a boy, whose birth seemed to presage another death. He writes to his daughter Minnie staying in Prince Edward in January 1875:

Snooks is a fine fellow,—sleeps 26 hours in the day,—and when he is not asleep, looks around as silently and solemnly and as wisely as an owl. Snooks is a fine fellow.

Nathaniel all his life hated being called "Nat," but in naming his only son Richard Henry after his brother he was perpetuating a lifelong devotion that could not have been stronger if they had been identical twins.

Mildred Morton Watkins, who outlived her husband by twenty-five years and her eldest child by two, dies in the autumn, aged eighty-six. Victorian families cherished last moments and last messages, especially when they were occasions for filial piety. Richard writes:

> After dark, however, her sufferings became very intense & remained so until a few moments before her death, when she became perfectly calm and died without a struggle.
>
> Was ever a life more worthy of admiration than hers? Oh how our hearts ought to glow with gratitude to our Heavenly Father for giving us such parents as were ours. And how earnestly ought we to strive to walk in the light which their characters and examples throw so brightly over our pathway.

Their characters had been formed during the past age. Henry N. Watkins was thirteen, Mildred ten in 1800. Henry N. and Charles Lewis Read were dead, and now with Mildred ends the old generation, in Meredith's phrase for Aunt Grantham, "the Eighteenth Century."

Chapter III. Nathaniel Watkins as a Progressive Farmer; Morale in the Seventies; the Spew Marrow Club of Granville; Nathaniel Makes the 'New York Herald' 1875-1877

Richard has a way of breaking off his political discussions in letters to his brother—"Enough of politics;" and Nathaniel in writing to him often abruptly announces, "Enough of farming." This habit italicizes the prime absorptions of the two men, though the lawyer also farmed on the side, and the farmer taught school.

Isolation in the nineteenth century rural South never bothered Nathaniel so long as his family and friends were within easy reach. He was deeply sociable; but his typical bald bulletin from Philadelphia in 1854 (in contrast with Susan's and Richard's sprightly letters) indicates, besides aversion to letter writing, little interest in cities. A life of quiet retirement, of Horatian content, was ideally suited to his intensely nervous and emotional temperament and to his passion for privacy.

Even his factual letter style manages to convey poetic feeling in his love of the soil. At Gloucester Point in 1862 he slips off whenever he can "to enjoy the silence, fresh air, and sweetness of the budding forests, and green fields:"

June 1862—I like this retired place—I went down in the deep oak woods a few days since about day,—it was a beautiful morning—& hundreds of birds were singing—the first birds I have heard since leaving Gloucester Point. I felt for a long time as if I were at home.

1863—It is early in the morning & I have just been relieved from guard. It is delightful, standing out these pleasant spring mornings, to see the day break, & the sun rise, & hear the birds begin to sing & everything wake up. The whole face of the country around here is covered with an unbroken crest of green, and it is almost impossible a few miles off to distinguish the wheat fields from the surrounding fields, so green is everything. . . .

Not a waterfall but a wheatfield haunted him like a passion.

But poetic, sentimental love of rural peace never made a good farmer. Nathaniel had also a firm grasp of agricultural detail, and his letters show that even during the war he was concerned not only with what was going on each season at Brookland (every cranny of which he could perfectly visualize), but also insatiably curious to observe whatever farms were in view. Nothing at home was too minute for his concern: he writes instructions about particular horses, as well as the currying and care of the lot; he wants new trees planted not just in the orchard, but oaks and elms and sycamores to beautify the place; above all he explains elaborately the drainage problem on his farm and the need always to preserve straw and manure for fertilizing. Preventing erosion and restoring fertility to exhausted land become almost an obsession.

Farming by remote control, with his wife Nancy as deputy, was possible because he was in the habit of keeping meticulous records of his activities in order to check the results of various experiments in different kinds of fertilizer, cover crops, trees, and plants, and so could always refer her to one of his little black books. He was for his day an unusually enlightened and scientific farmer, always putting theory into practice, always seeking a better way. Having learned once and for all during the War the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables, he even managed to produce figs so far north by ingeniously cutting roots on one side of young trees, bending them flat on other side and covering them with straw during the winter. His apple and peach orchards, his grape arbors were designed to bear at every possible season. He made ponds and stocked them with carp and always had fish traps in the river. In describing the effects of the blockade during the War, his wife had written: "We save everything now." And Nathaniel's whole farm economy was based on avoidance of waste, on returning to the soil as much as was taken out.

Such details bore most of us; none the less to a generation that is finally waking to the need for conserving resources these farming methods are one of the most illuminating facets of the letters. I shall

quote only one characteristic passage from Nathaniel's last war letters, having already quoted one from the earlier series. This was written March 6 1865, a month before Surrender, and shows the nervous strain of that desperate time in its irrascibility and feeling of futility:

> About putting all the manure on the tobacco,—I wrote several days since that as things are now, I thought it would be best to make no tobacco,—or maybe just enough for seed. I said in my last, anticipating some such questions as the Spring comes on, that I wished you all to decide all such matters without referring to me. I am entirely unable to decide here, & it takes too long to write & hear from me.

He cannot, however, resist old preoccupations:

> It is now almost if not quite too late to top-dress wheat. I think it would be much better to put the manure on the corn—it will tell then on two crops,--on the corn, & on the wheat or oat crop which immediately follows the corn. If put on the wheat it will only benefit that crop, & as they sow no clover or grass at my house now, its strength will be expended on grain crops. Besides, as the corn is to be in the Granary Lot, it will require much less handling & I had rather improve the land nearer the house. . . .
>
> I would like also to have a large crop of blackeyed peas, planted to themselves, & the other pea plants in the corn wherever the land is good enough to make them. I don't want any crop cultivated in the little orchard which will injure the trees—we certainly have land enough to spare that much for an orchard. I would also like very much to have it all planted this spring.—But enough of my farm.

Richard relied on him frequently for advice and suggestions, just as Nathaniel sought his brother's counsel on legal matters:

> September 21 1869--About an orchard—I hardly know what to write. I can give you some conclusions I have drawn from my little experience. Don't try to have too many trees. One hundred well attended to will do you more good than three or four times that number badly cultivated. I erred in planting too many. Make selections of a few choice varieties of winter apples—a good many trees of each variety—giving a succession from 1st December to Spring;—then have a few trees of every variety of good Summer & Fall apples you can get.
>
> I will mention only such varieties as I know to be good,—making an x over the best, (or one such as I know to be first rate).

He goes on to catalogue twenty-seven varieties of apples suitable for all seasons in Prince Edward, with their special properties, adding,

"Of course there are many good apples which I have not mentioned— you know them as well as I do."

> I wish you could see Mr. Daniel's orchard. It is a curiosity. I am confident it has five hundred barrels—and strange to say though the trees are loaded the apples are of fine size. He has dried in the ordinary way over 1000 lbs., and has now just completed a dry-house & gotten a set of peelers and corers, & is going into the business in earnest;--drying for the Northern markets. Freight is too heavy on green apples. Think his orchard will clear him $400.

James Daniel now had to specialize, since Waterloo had been reduced by the forced sale to 228 acres.

Nathaniel requests and receives several copies of Ryland's "Essay on Tobacco" for distribution to friends; undoubtedly a copy went to Richard. But his special interests are fertilizer and grasses. For his knowledge of grasses he achieves a brief moment of national recognition. In response to another inquiry from Richard he writes March 19 1877:

> I am glad you take the Southern Planter, and are more engaged on your farm, & interested in farming—think it will benefit your health.
>
> The grass you ask about is nothing but old Dr. Matt's Lespedeza. (Mr. Scott got seed from him several years ago,) & will not succeed in Northern Carolina or Virginia, but is all it professes to be farther South of us. It must have been a very small place which Mr. Walker, whose piece you noticed in the Planter, saw in this county, as to my knowledge every trial of it in this county has been a failure.*
>
> From several little, accidental experiments on my farm, I believe that very heavy mowing & thorough cultivation for two or three years in succession, followed by a close turf of grass (of any kind) will successfully keep off broken-straw. In order to get the turf, sow several kinds of grass,—five or six—seed heavily,—and in the fall.
>
> I think I am improving my land by the pea-fallow. This method requires time, but costs nothing, as the benefit I get from the peas by grazing with hogs, pays all expenses,—the expense being in labor & not in bought fertilizers. . . .
>
> I wish you could have been with me at our Club meeting last Saturday. We had several excellent essays, a fine speech from our President (Dr. Wilson) and good deal of sound, practical talk, and

---

*A little later he himself succeeded in getting for several years a good stand of Lespedeza in Granville, and predicted a great future for it.

> some rich fun. Our Club is composed of fine material, & is we all think doing good. But enough of farming. . . .

This is the Spew-Marrow Farming Club of Granville, organized in 1875 by the farmers in the neighborhood partly to bolster their morale, but primarily to pool for the general benefit the experience of each individual. The Club held monthly meetings to hear papers on specific subjects, yearly reports on each member's farm by a committee of three, and once a year an address by the President. Dr. Wilson's speech, referred to above by Nathaniel, was published (a copy is among the letters); it makes very interesting reading, especially its appeal for farmers in the Midwest to cooperate with those in the South in order to strengthen their common front against the industrial East.

Nathaniel was, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, "a clubbable man." He was also a great believer in system. It will be remembered that during the tedious months in winter quarters he had organized his small group of cousins into "a free & easy club ("The Literary Club);" for "all reading does very little good without system." Inevitably he became not only a prime mover but the Secretary of the Spew-Marrow Club, and this explains why so many of the records happen to be preserved among his personal papers. All except the elaborate schedule, "Regular Order of Business," and the report on his own farm, are in his handwriting. There may be—or may have been—other records in other hands. But his are full enough to show in detail the workings of the Club, its membership, and its activities for the years 1875-1877. On learning how it was improving Granville farms and farmers' morale, Richard was so favorably impressed that he made several attempts to organize a similar group in Prince Edward. As late as December 1882 he writes:

> We try occasionally to get up a farmers' club in the neighborhood which meets a few times & then all hands get too busy to attend and it falls through.

Judging from Nathaniel's roll and sample attendance record, of the fourteen members of the Spew-Marrow Club, eight missed rarely. The most regular were Dr. G. A. Wilson, J. H. Davis, W. H. Taylor, Nathaniel Watkins, and two of the young cousins who had been with him in the Army, Tom Watkins and Daniel Booker. As Nathaniel wrote his brother, the meetings were partly social—"a good deal of sound, practical talk, and some rich fun;" but in their mutual criticisms they were often blunt and unsparing.

The teasing sometimes slips into satire. Perhaps one reason why W. H. Gregory drops out in this sarcastic comment in the report on his 1000-acre farm by Nathaniel and his committee:

> Mr. Gregory thinks it bad economy to pan & shelter & feed his cattle during the severe weather & pitiless storms of winter,—in

> fact that it is actually injurious to the poor cows, and frequently results in their death when the genial and relaxing weather of spring comes on. Your committee is happy to say that as a result of his treatment, his loss last spring after the unusually mild winter was only two out of twelve—16 2/3 per cent. . . .
>
> His land seemed well adapted to clover & grass,—especially Red Top: but there was not a grass or clover lot to be seen on all the farm. . . .

Yet the same report compliments Mr. Gregory on his excellent tobacco, his profitable methods with sheep. Severe censure is always balanced where possible with praise. A detailed and searching analysis of Tom Watkins' farm, also in Nathaniel's handwriting, shows that family partiality did not deter him from censure; but the itemized summary typical of these reports concludes:

> We congratulate the Club on the evident improvement in the management of this young member; and congratulate him on the general success of his energetic efforts during the present year.

There was a deal of mutual congratulation, showing how much these criticisms of each other bolstered their morale—even to the point of mild elation, certainly rare in the rural South of that day. For example, the Committee reporting on Nathaniel's own farm in 1877 remark at the end:

> We beg in conclusion of this report, written in the month of January of a new year, to be permitted to congratulate the Club upon the happy effects which its establishment & its Subsequent labors have in our opinion produced in our midst.
>
> We see improvements in many particulars. Enlarged ideas upon various subjects pertaining to farming have been developed & cultivated. The 15 or 16 months of its Existence have not been without marked benefit to us. With our footsteps firmly planted on this pleasant & profitable road, let us continue to advance until the Spew Marrow Club wins for itself a reputation for Enterprise and practical usefullness.
>
> Hamilton, Davis, T. A. Watkins.

The following passage in one of Nathaniel's reports deserves singling out to show the vast strides made since the day of farmers like old Charles Lewis Read, who had abandoned Brookland as unprofitable in the thirties; the evidence of a new spirit of conservation:

> Mr. Gregory has for some time been rapidly bringing new lands into cultivation; which he has accomplished by deadening all of the large timber.
>
> This process has resulted in great waste of wood and valuable timber, and leaves much of his land in unsightly condition. Nor

could your committee see the economy of this method, even in the items of time and labor,—the constant falling of the dead limbs & trunks, extending the labor of their removal (which might be more cheaply accomplished at once) over several years, greatly to the detriment of growing crops, & threatening danger to hands and teams.

Your committee would suggest that the labor and expense of improving (even to high condition) an acre originally good but now worn down, is much less than that required to bring into cultivation an acre of well timbered forest land,—the one operation enhancing the value of the farm, and the other diminishing it. . . .

In addition to these monthly reports on members' farms, special talks were given and experiments recounted. A long essay of Nathaniel's, "The proper methods of applying domestic manure," gives an idea what they were like. Another of his Club talks on the subject beings thus:

I am convinced that the waste and losses in our farms from all other causes combined do not equal the waste & loss in the single item of manure.

We leave our wagons, plows & other utensils exposed to the destructive action of the weather from year's end to year's end,—we suffer our young stock of all kinds to become dead poor just at the age when we should expect the most vigorous growth, & we allow ditches to fill up & lands to wash for the want of a little timely attention. We suffer our fields to be trampled by all kinds of stock, & our crops to be preyed on for the lack of good fences;—but the losses from all of these sources combined do not equal the loss we yearly suffer in the single item of domestic manure.

He then mentions the sources of domestic manure in the order in which he thinks they sustain the greatest loss from want of attention. First is human faeces!

To feed an adult for one year it takes from 15 to 20 bushels of grain & 150 lbs. of meat. . . . This takes directly from the soil of our farms not less than 2000 lbs. (a low estimate) of the richest plant food for the support of each adult person, of which not one single lb. is ever returned systematically as manure.

In China, Belgium & France, the most densely peopled & best cultivated countries of the old world, human excrement is all utilized, & considered a manure of the first importance;—the richest in plant food because produced by the consumption of the richest & most concentrated food. It is by some considered compared with stable manure, as 5 to 1. . . . I beg leave to refer the Club to my earth closet, constructed at a cost of not more than $2 or 3. . . .

He was seldom content to leave any theory untried, or its precise cost uncalculated. Second on his list of the most wasted products is Ashes:

> To cook our food & warm our bodies, there is burnt on the farm of each member of this Club not less than an average of 50 cords of wood—from which not less than 100 bushels of ashes might be collected (a low estimate). To raise our tobacco plants we burn an average of not less than 500 yds. of land, from which at least 50 Bushels of ashes may be saved—making in all 150 bushels of ashes.
>
> And yet who of us, gentlemen, ever makes rich one single acre of his farm land with ashes? Our good wives probably save enough ashes to make their soap (many do not do even this) and the rest are thrown out . . . to be leached of all their valuable properties (all of which are soluble) by the winter rains. An easy & cheap way of saving this valuable manure is a good ash house, constructed of brick & shingles costing less than $10.00, for the yearly reception of all the ash made on the farm. . . .

Third is the manure of cattle, sheep, and hogs. And so it goes.

He is a rabid conservationist. His constant theme is best summed up by the opening of another essay:

> Manure should be applied with a liberal hand. The farmer who attempts to cheat his land out of good crops by a stingy application of manure, will soon find that he has ripped open the goose for the golden eggs. If one acre with manure represented by 200 lbs. of Guano can be made to produce 800 lbs. of tobacco,—the application of double the quantity of manure, increasing the yield to 1000 lbs., will pay better. . . .

And by a query at the end of a farm report: "Does the use of Guano pay in the long run, without domestic manures, & clover & grass?"

Before dismissing the Spew-Marrow Club it is only fair to glance briefly at the report on the farm of the man who so severely judges his neighbors. He by no means escapes criticism, nor would he have wished to, since he readily admitted mistakes in calculation or experiment. His fences draw gentle sarcasm, his garden and orchard are not up to snuff:

> The other worm fences, though they might turn stock not addicted to jumping, fall considerably short of what might fairly be deemed good fences. . . .
>
> The Committee found the garden in a neglected condition. . . . We are compelled also to criticise Mr. Watkins' orchard. The trees are in a very untrimmed condition and bear other Evidences of being neglected.

The Committee "regretted, and indeed were surprized, to see Draw Bar Entrances" instead of gates; they take issue with his method of drainage, but are indulgent on the generally judicious management of the farm:

> If the proprietor were as are most of the other members of this Club, engaged in no other pursuit than farming, any defects in this particular would, we feel well assured, be speedily remedied.

We are not surprised to find him highly commended for careful conservation and storage of all kinds of manure: "His hog-pen manure mixed with litter has been heaped up & covered over with Earth—the roof being an inclined plane,—a method protecting & preserving this rich & valuable manure which is worthy of our imitation. . . . Mr. Watkins keeps salt all the time (under Shelter) accessible to his larger stock." They find his stables and cowhouses "very superior . . . the plan & arrangements remarkable for their adaptation to the purpose."

But more interesting are his experiments:

> One lot of Six acres now in what, which three years since was considered incapable of producing more than One Bushel of corn to the acre, has within that time by sowing cornfield peas & turning under the vines, been brought up to a healthy & Vigorous Condition.
>
> The only help to this result was the application of four Bushels of plaster and 400 lbs. (or 67 per acre) of guano applied the first year. The wheat crop in this lot bids fair to compete with those on the neighboring lots. It is Estimated by Mr. Watkins that the peas gathered for seed & those furnished to his hogs have fully reimbursed him for all the cost of the process of improvement.
>
> This is a striking instance of the value of peas as an improver of our impoverished lands. A portion of the Rye on one of these lots had been top dressed with Stable Manure with marked beneficial results, as compared with that portion which had not been so favored.
>
> We saw a fine quantity of Hay from grass, clover & drilled corn, on hand. Mr. W's operation in drilled corn is worthy to be noted. He put in 1/2 acre of land manured as if for tobacco—with domestic manures & fertilizer, the latter at the rate of 200 lbs. per acre. About the middle of June--after a failure to get a stand of tobacco—he planted his corn in the drill with a distance of [3] feet between the drills. After it arrived at the roasting Ear State & not before, he cut & fed to his horses as needed—for 3 weeks or more, without any additional food whatever. At the Expiration of that time he cut the remainder down & cured it for fodder. . . . From an estimate he made, three acres in such corn would feed five horses a year without any other food.

Most interesting of all is this reference to Nathaniel's "Essay on Grasses and Forage Crops," of which there is no copy among his papers because the original was sent to the typesetter, for this is the only one of his essays to be published:

> Your Committee have the pleasure to refer most particularly & favorably to Mr. Watkins' Efforts in the department of the grasses. His Enterprise & liberality in connection with this important & interesting branch of farming Economy have not only proved Successful & profitable to himself, but afford a bright Example to his brother farmers. . . .
>
> The writer cannot refrain, just here, from alluding to the fact that in the New York Herald report of the proceedings of Farmers Club of the American Institute held at the Cooper Institute Building in the City of New York on the 16th of this January copious Extracts from Mr. Watkins' Essay on the "Grasses & Forage Crops" (which was read at one meeting at Mr. Gregory's in July last) were published amongst the views presented before that Body.
>
> The only drawback to this Complimentary circumstance is that the Spew Marrow Club was not mentioned at all, but Mr. Watkins was announced as hailing from Virginia. Mr. Watkins' views, as published, had the appearance of having been delivered in person, and as it is possible that he might have made a flying visit, at that time, to New York, this Club—in the event that he was personally present—might very reasonably Enquire of the gentleman whether he was ashamed whilst amongst the Big Men of Science to acknowledge his connection with the Spew-Marrow Club & with the State of North Carolina.
>
> Your Committee ventures to express the opinion that the agricultural reputation of its members is partly the property of the Club and not alone of the individual himself. . . .

I have called Nathaniel Watkins "the most brilliant farmer that these families produced." That statement is based on tributes of those who knew his methods at first hand as well as on this information, and is of course relative. I should add the qualifications: for his time, for his isolated place, for his limited means. His ideas were not original; he was no Thomas Jefferson, no Edmund Ruffin. But his attitude toward the soil was original in the South of his day and only too rare. Granted a little capital, better land, freedom from the necessity to teach school on the side, his story would have been quite different. What could he not have done in Iowa in 1877?

Chapter IV. Harder Times; Hegira of Negroes to Tennessee; Letters from Ex-slaves 1877-1883

I remarked earlier that the defeat of the South was like a delayed reaction, the full impact of which was not felt until the seventies, when the facts of economic life were relentlessly borne home. Sometimes we get in the midst of family news only a hint of what was going on, as in Susan's letter January 20 1872:

> Mr. Redd has gone today to Woodfork Spencer's sale, he is going to move to Texas.

Such forced sales and removals had become too commonplace to require more than casual notation. But disaster gathers momentum. In 1879 Richard writes to Nathaniel:

> In describing your condition financially you described mine exactly. I have no prospect of getting out of debt. Indeed have not quite so good a chance as yourself, for I have ceased to get anything to do in my profession: there are so many lawyers now settled in Farmville and I so far from the Court House or any public place.
>
> I have no resources but my little farm, from which it seems at this time that nothing can be sold above the cost of production. And yet when I ride through the country and see the condition of my neighbors I find very few doing any better and a great many much worse.
>
> At the close of the War Tom Tredway & Frank Redd were I reckon the richest farmers in our county. They are now as poor as beggars. . . . Were you to meet [Frank Redd], so haggard & dejected does he look that I am quite sure you would not recognize him. John Knight's fine residence was a short time since advertised to be sold at public auction. . . . Andrew Venable (Black Andrew) is hopelessly insolvent, but a sincere honest Christian. And of those just around me who are . . . living from hand to mouth are Capt. Robt. Smith, Howson Clark, Charley Redd, W. A. Lash (who purchased our old home). . . .
>
> All on a dead level my dear Sir, all on a dead level. And I begin to think it fair to presume that a man who makes money these days is a rascal.

This was the active period of the Spew-Marrow Club and Nathaniel found his life rich and full, but his purse empty:

> March 19 1877—We are all healthy, and very busy & quite happy, —and very poor. Would be happier if you & yours lived near us. . . I often wish I could sell out & come back to the old neighborhood. but it is impossible to sell.

> I prefer this country, because it is more retired, & further from any rail-road. I am opposed to railroads--they bring extravagance, corruption & immigration (all the enemies of our people), with no advantages except daily mails which tell of nothing but extravagance & corruption and crime.

This is extreme, but the seventies were not a pretty decade in the history of the United States. Considering the exhausted soil, deterioration of farm implements, lack of funds, Nathaniel was accomplishing minor miracles at Brookland; but no one can repair the waste of decades overnight, and a farmer depends not just on good crops but good markets and prices:

> I have but little time to devote to my farm, and often fear that I lose as much on my farm as I make in my School-room. If I were out of debt entirely, I would stop teaching, but the failure in a tobacco crop last year, & an inferior one the year before keeps my head under the water, and my nose to the grindstone. I can't get used to it either, any more than I can to our most excellent, good government.

The "most excellent, good government" of Presidents Grant and Hayes.

These difficulties of course affected the Negroes, too, directly and indirectly. A man with a failing crop has little cash, and without cash cannot pay wages for labor. Sometime during 1876 in Granville a Mr. Barbee, who had married one of Nancy Watkins' aunts, determined to pull up stakes and move to land which he owned in the cotton country. Even more than tobacco cotton takes labor, and Mr. Barbee scouted the neighborhood to find Negroes willing to go with him to Tennessee. Among others he persuaded Polly Graham, Tom, and several of the Negroes who had stayed on at Brookland after Surrender, to take their chances in the west. Nathaniel Watkins urged them not to go, assuring them that they at least had the security of food and shelter so long as they remained at Brookland. But of course they were free agents, and they went.

In March 1878 Nancy Watkins received this letter from Polly Graham, postmarked Durhamville, Tennessee:

> Mrs. Nannie Watkins--
>
> I have neglected writing so long that I am almost ashamed to write. I was so dissatisfied was the cause of my not writing before.
>
> We are very anxious to hear from you and to hear how you are getting along. All of us are well. My Mother died last Saturday night. She was sick but a short time.
>
> Tell Mars Nat Tom says he has found every thing just as he told him and nothing as Mr. Barbee said. We left him last Christmas without anything. None of our family are living with Mr. Barbee.

Beverly and Tom expect to be back to Carolina as soon as they get able.

Frances has been very sick but is now well. She has been living with Miss Margaret and Miss Helen [white] until this year. She will work in the field. Tom and Sister Henrietta professed religion last August and Tom has been living a christian live ever since. Tom says give his love to Mr. Hines [white pastor in Granville whom Nathaniel always got to preach to the Negroes] and tell him he has not joined any church nor does he expect to until he goes back to Carolina, we are all waiting until we go back to join the church.

Give my love to Aunt Betsey, Sarah and Evelin. I have had two children since I came here. I named one for you, the other I named Ella Frances.

We have had the hardest times I ever saw in Haywood even water was scarce. Where we are living now we have springs. We are living with Mrs. Mary Person a daughter of Mr. Charles Feild the gentleman that bought Aunt Maria and brought her to this country many years ago. Aunt Maria came to see us summer before last and spent a week with us and died soon after going home.

Tell Marster Nat I want to tell how I am getting along. Alfred has moved down in the Mississippi bottom.

I hope both of you will write me soon and send me your likeness and the babies if you can't send Miss Nannie's and all of the children. . . . Tell Aunt Betsey to try and send word to brother Loveless and aunt Hattie word about mother's death.

Your Servant
Polly Graham

Judging by the handwriting and syntax, this letter was probably dictated to some white friend. Polly Graham was one of the Negroes given by James Daniel in 1859 to Nancy and Nathaniel Watkins shortly after their marriage. The Tom whom she mentions had been a Watkins Negro. Polly is frequently mentioned in previous letters, especially Nathaniel's in 1868, when she and Eliza run the household at Brookland during Nancy Watkins' absence. The Catharine mentioned below figures prominently in Nancy's letters from Waterloo in 1863. This fragment of another of Polly's letters to Granville survives:

Sister sends her love to Miss Millie and Miss Lou [Nancy Watkins' sisters], particular to aunt Betsey. Catharine sends love, she has eight children, her last is a girl she expects to name it for your mother. . . .

Tell Aunt Rose I hope to hear from her soon and that she is leading a better life than she was when I last heard from her. We are all trying to live in refference to our inheritance in heaven.

Please write soon and don't wait as I did. Tom says write and

tell him if the country is any better or worse than it was when he left there. He is going to try to work and make money to go back on.

Ritta says please inquire of her people and let her know all about them when you write. We heard of the death of Sarah's husband, we all sympathise with her. She must look to Him who has promised to be a father to the fatherless and husband to the widow. . . . Willie and James send love to Harry and Edward. Tom says ask Sarah to write him word where his uncle Beverly is also where uncle Bob Moten is. Tom says he wants to get back before Martha and Sue gets beaux in their heads, he don't think he can find any body here that is good enough for them.

I will close by begging you to write to me soon,

In love and friendship
Polly Graham.

But mail was unreliable in those days and these Negroes shifted from place to place. In November 1878 comes another letter, this time from Ripley, Tennessee, and from Polly's daughter Martha, bearing sad tidings:

My dear Mistress

It has been a long time since any of us heard from you all. We wrote last Spring but did not get an answer, but now we have sad news to write of the death of my mother (Polly). She died the first of October of child bed fever. Her baby died a week before she did. She left nine children—two of us are nearly grown & can take charge of the smaller ones, but cannot take her place—we feel that her death is a great loss to us—My Grandfather (Billy Wilson) died last Summer also--Mama died very happy—all of her sisters were with her.

Papa sends his love to Mars Nat. & says he will try & go to N.C. next fall.

Aunt Ritta wants to know how Miss Beth Morton's health is and where she is living. How are Dr. Wilson's family? I wish you would write down the ages of all Mama's children on a slip of paper & send it to us & please send us Miss Minnie's photograph.

Please Miss Nannie answer this as soon as you get it. We are so anxious to hear from you all & it would be such a comfort to us to get a letter from you, for we feel like you are [more] nearly kin to us than any other white person in the world.

We all send our best love to all the children & Mars Nat—

Very respectfully
Martha Graham

That this correspondence lasted for at least five years proves that Nancy Watkins' replies from Granville must finally have found their way to Ripley, Tennessee. The last two letters are the most

interesting, for they are unquestionably written by the Negroes themselves, and are two of the many instances where no transcription can give the actual effect. So much of the immediacy of any correspondence comes from characteristic handwriting--the formation of the letters, their slope, their tempo. We may smile over bafflement at the illogic of English spelling and syntax, over naive delight in ceremonial address. But no one can laugh at the native dignity, the genuine feeling, the rightness of tone intuitively struck--the self-respect of two women writing to a respected friend who was formerly their mistress. And there is a sense of triumph in Martha's and Susan's writing their own letters independent of any white person.

Martha Graham, now Martha Barbee, writes September 21, 1881:

Nutbush Hay
Wood Co. Teenn

Mrs Nancy Nannie Wodkins Dear friend it it af fordes me no little pleaser to rite you this letter My famley air well at present but doing well and in hope when these few lins Reach you tha may find you in joying the same Blessing it has bin along time sence i herd from the old Cuntrey wee all wishes to here from you my sister Susan Roberd is living with me. . . .

All of marmars Childrins air grown ex sept 3. an the air in My Care nearley all of the People that came from thair with urse air gone to Ark Can saw I am yet living with the same man that wee came to this Con try with rite me word About all the Colerd People a speshely Cusen Sara Natall. uncle Bevley has lost his secon wife and wantes to marrey a gan But cant find a girl yoong a nuf . . . . aunt Susa royster is living in Ark Can sass. But she exspect to Cum back this fall. . . . i am the mother five girls the oldis is name sally the second Eddie & the third is name Polley the forth taler & i hasent named the Babie. it is six months old. I wishes that you may send a name for her rite me word whether uncle theardore danel air living yet. . . .

gave my lov to miss Miney All of the Childrin sends love to yoo. . . . aunt agie wilson says Pleas send her word whair som of her peoples is living aunt Shallard Brown is as yet living And is the mother of 18 living Childrins an too ded an her oldist dorter mary is married an is the mother of eleven 11. Childin Rite soon as you can and let me here from you All. I am polle grahms oldist dorter Martha You mus sign my name And poste offis as follerin

Martha Barbee
Nutbush Hay wood Co. Tee

good By to all

And finally, dated by the envelope November 18, 1883, this from Martha's younger sister Susan:

Miss Nannie

Dear friend it is with much pleasure I sat my self To address you with a few lines in order To here from you   we are all well at this time and gatting a long verry well   sister Martha are living on Mr. Barbees place yet   She are married To a man By the name of Hit Barbee   she are the Mother of three children all are girls   Mothers Baby child are living with her

I hav bin married one year & nine months I has no children I married Aunt Jinnie son Boly Robearts   I haven eny of the children with me they all are in the hands of Uncle Tom Wilson Lizzie and Mollie are as larg as I am all of the children grows very fast

we are doing very well this yeare   we will make three Bales of cotton Uncle Goin has a leece and we works on his land and gives him the third   cotton crops are cut off verry much this year and cotton are only nine cents per lb   I am at home now and cosen Boly are gone To the lake with Mr Sanford they all left for too weeks and I felt lonesom and i throught I would write

I went to see Aunt susan last friday an she says Giv her lov To Miss lucy jane Miss Mildred & send her word how they are   Aunt kate send her love to you all Uncle Tom Wilson sends his lov to you and all his old friends he saze Send him word whether Aunt Betey are living or not and Uncle Billie   Aunt Aggie says Giv thir love to Miss Bella Graham and send her word how she are   Uncle Bevley send thire love To all of his friends and kindes   he lost his wife not long ago and Grand father Billie Marrow died last winter   Uncle Goin sends his love to all he are married again his daughter susan died last May.

Now Giv my love To Miss Minnie and tell her to plese write To me and send me her likeness in her letter

Write in the care of Capton Sanford. . . . Giv   my love to all my friends and write soon To you Friend

Susan Robearts

Thus Polly's children survived the initial hardships of their transplanting to Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi. Her great-great grandchildren are now, no doubt, in Detroit and Los Angeles, Germany or Japan.

Chapter V. More Schooling; Patty Widowed; Word from Massachusetts and Wisconsin; Grief at Brookland 1877-1889

As we have seen, 1877 was a depressing year, but it closed on a cheerful note from Richard Watkins to Nathaniel's daughter Minnie, now seventeen:

Tell Papa that we have here a most excellent teacher and only four scholars: Fannie Redd, Sally Stokes, and my two girls. If he will send you over Xmas or New Year's day you can be well taught in Music, French, Latin, higher Mathematics, History, Geography for six months at no cost to him or myself. I have employed the teacher and will pay her the same whether you come or not. Minnie has a spare place in her bed for you, and I have a plenty of bread and meat, and Mary a bountiful supply this winter of fowls and milk and butter. . . .

Tell him that I have made this year the largest crop of everything that I have made since I have been here and that my health is better than it has been since the Surrender. And that above all things I want him to pull up stakes and come over here and live right by me where we can see him &all of you every day.

And now I have sent your Pa just as much word as I am going to send him in this letter. A rascal, he don't ever write to me and I am not going to send him any more messages. . . . I went to Charlotte Court last Monday and saw Uncle Will, Uncle Buck Scott & Uncle David Morton, and a great variety of other kin folks and all seemed to be well and in tolerably good spirits.

Times over here have been hard so long that we are all getting used to them and like the old Confederate soldiers we sing the song

Now let the wide world wag as it will
We'll be gay & happy still
Gay & merry, gay & happy
We'll be gay & happy still.

Times are indeed changing, as this daring feminine exploit shows:

The meeting of the Stockholders of Richmond & Danville R.R. will take place in Richmond next Wednesday. Mary, and your Aunt Sue Redd and Miss Nannie Dupuy have gone distracted and are going down without an escort. Don't you reckon they will have a great time prancing around Richmond without a gentleman to look after them from Wednesday until Saturday?

Nathaniel accepted this generous offer. Henceforth, before going off inevitably to the Peace Institute in Raleigh for final polishing, the girls of both families were educated together, partly at Richard's, partly at Nathaniel's.*

Richard's boy Asa has now "gone into pants" and developed a passion for machinery: "I hope he will make a distinguished machinest when he grows up to manhood; such men are especially needed in the

*These nieces passed on to their children their recollections of the happy home life and fine tuteldge at "Uncle Nat's."

South now." But Asa was to become a Presbyterian preacher, a professor at Hampden-Sydney, an amateur painter. It is strange that so religious a family has produced few ministers.

Two years later Richard again tries to cheer up a brother despondent over his debts and failure of another tobacco crop, and sick unto death of teaching school:

> I am today in the full enjoyment of single blessedness. . . . Now if you were only near enough to come & stay with me I would take you fishing or coon hunting or give you a big dinner or chew tobacco with you and spit around generally. . . .

He felt that he had something to make him spit:

> You have doubtless seen from the papers with what loathsome set of demagogues & negroes our Legislature is filled. Tis amazing to see to what extent our people are demoralized by the war, the natural result no doubt of subjugation. . . . I hope that your people are doing better.

Granville was doing better, or perhaps Brookland was just too far from the Courthouse and politics. Nathaniel writes to Richard's daughter, "Emmie":

> November 1881—I had thought of migrating to Virginia until after the famine, but I believe a little hunger & poverty will be easier to bear than your Virginia politics. Don't say I have the "blues," but when I look into the future, it isn't altogether as bright as I have seen it.
>
> But in spite of all, the matrimonial excitement seems to be high [there follows a long catalogue of weddings sparked by that of his own daughter, Minnie*]. . . . I have heard that a big "simmon" crop is the sign of a cold winter. I regard matrimonial excitement as indicative of very hard times. My old lady has actually become infected, and looks younger & sprier than she has for many years, & has a serious idea, I think, of fixing her hair in beau-catchers around her forehead & temples, and talks of getting red stockings and slippers. . . .
>
> With the above exceptions (the marrying and my wife) all things in this old neighborhood are going on about as dryly as usual—the people growing older and poorer, and uglier. . . .
>
> Jus now I wish you could see Aunt Nannie—nodding a little, and sewing a little, but nodding twice to sewing once. . . . She says I

*"Minnie" (Mildred Henry) Watkins married Mr. John R. Morton of Charlotte County, and moved to Falkland, in Prince Edward, in the same neighborhood with her father's people. It was here that her mother, sisters and brother, later made their home.

must tell you that she feels towards you as towards one of her own children.

Emily Dupuy Watkins, against her Uncle Nathaniel's advice, got up a little school of her own in Prince Edward—five young lady boarders and "two right large boys as day scholars."

> January 1883—I feel almost sorry to hear of Emmie's success in getting a good school. I do not know of any occupation which will completely break down a good constitution sooner than school-teaching—and more especially when the teacher & scholars are thrown together during much of the time outside of strictly school hours.
>
> Most persons can stand teaching for five or six hours of the day, if after school all care & thoughts of the school can be thrown off. . . .

He speaks with grim conviction, having had boarding scholars in his home for the past fourteen years. And when at night, after reading aloud to the boys and holding family prayers, he withdrew with his candle to lie on his bed and pore over Littel's *Living Age*, every time they heard his mild tattoo on the night-table his family knew that his heart was lurching again. He was right; they were "all growing older, and poorer, and uglier:"

> If this goes much farther with me, I do not know what will become of me. I shall make an honest effort on my farm this year, &, if I fail, will be ready then for any move.
>
> I have been experimenting a little with cotton—made 2 1/2 bales of 500 lbs. on five acres, & not a very good cotton year. I think I shall try a mixed crop this year—tobacco, cotton, & molasses. . . . The cotton & molasses crops come into market as soon as they are made, and are *equal to ready money*.
>
> If I fail, I will come over & we will hunt some of Dr. Dabney's deer. Or you come & help me fish for some of my carp. . . .
>
> We heard of the death of Mr. Scott, & I wrote to Pattie as soon as I could. . . .

Mr. Buck Scott's siege had been long and harrowing before he died, and Patty's cares, as Richard describes them, great:

> He had become too much paralyzed to walk. Patty is truly to be pitied. She has no rest by day & very little at night. Is kept constantly awake and says that she has to get up with him ten or twelve times a night. . . . I think of her constantly and wish that I could help her, but am unable to do it.

Except for young Embry, after twelve years of marriage Patty was again alone. There were plenty of kin in Charlotte, but she felt cut off from her nearest, writing to Nathaniel:

April 1885—I have been wanting to write to you ever since I heard you were in Prince Edward & not able to get to see me. . .

I have undertaken to carry on the farm & attend to Embry's business, at a time when, to keep house and only attend to its duties properly, is rather more than a lone woman can do, so with a school in the house, under my supervision. I find sometimes that my heart dies within me. . . .

Embry is tall & spare not at all strong, fond of writing & drawing, and doesn't care much for farming operations. His Father was too old & infirm to take him about with him much & so he has been raised at my knees. Tom Watkins is a great comfort to me. . . .

I am always glad to see any of you. I see very little of my near kin now. The boys have just come out of school. Embry says "Give my love to Uncle Nat & tell him I will write to Harry." Very much love to all of you your Ever Aff. Sister Pattie J. Scott.

In August 1885 comes another letter to Nancy Watkins from Miss Sarah Skinner in Massachusetts, now nearly sixty:

Although long years have passed since we last met and we are now on the downhill of life looking towards sunset, may I not hope you yet cherish kind recollections of the "Yankee" teacher who will never cease while life lasts to love "cousin Moderation." . . .

My heart is too full for utterance tonight, when I think of the experiences we have passed through, the dreadful war, the dear dear friends who have gone to Heaven, the many many changes which time has wrought. . . .

We have greatly enjoyed cousin Marier's visit and hope our southern friends one and all will often summer with us. . . . Seeing her has awakened my former interest in my southern friends and I have plied her with questions whenever we have met. It seems a very short time since I left Virginia and North Carolina, and I cannot realize that those I left children are now grown to manhood and womanhood—even you have been a grandmother, and I sympathize much with you at the loss of your grandchild. . . .

My kind regards to Mr. Watkins, and believe me your ever loving friend.

This letter Nancy copied and sent to an old school mate, who wrote back:

It did indeed seem as if I could see and hear her and you too, and it brought back to mind, so vividly, the happy school-days when I used to see you and her everyday; and hear her "Cousin Moderation." . . . I have passed through many sad scenes since last we met, but I have never ceased to think of and love the dear friends of old Waterloo. . . . I wrote Miss Sarah a long letter and shall look anxiously for an answer.

There was word from the Ballantines, too, in the same spirit of sad recollection, but with an added joy, since the thorn long rankling between Mr. Ballantine and Richard [payment for the emancipated slaves] was at last removed. Mary Ballantine Brown writes from Wisconsin to her Uncle Richard December 18 1885:

> I must write in time for you to get it before the Blessed Christmas time--the time of Peace on Earth and good will to men. I want first of all to tell you that the correspondence between you and my dear Pa has made me very happy. He sent me your letters to read and told me what he had written you—and I am so glad my dear, dear Uncle, that Pa has lived long enough to hear you say the words you did to him; and I want to tell you that I do most cordially endorse his action in regard to the note he held. Those words are to me worth more than all the money could have been.
>
> Oh, how I do long to see you once more, and my dear Mollie. . . . I cannot yet think of her as my aunt—a matronly lady with gray hairs and grown daughters. When I think of and dream of you (as I do often) it is as we used to be together at the "Washington Home" --or else at the old place [Oldham] where you and I were born.
>
> But in all the long years of separation, I have loved you both and have believed in you--I have always kept your letters—every one you ever wrote me since that first one from Richmond when you studied law with Peachy Grattan. One day last Fall I came across the package . . . and took them out and read them to my children, and we all enjoyed them ever so much. I have always kept my children fully acquainted with all my Virginia friends & relatives and they love you all.
>
> How pleased I'd be to show you my three boys! . . . Paul is very fond of music, and plays the violin quite well. He goes to Oshkosh every week to take a lesson, and now has one pupil here. . . . Lewis and Hal are my little boys, Hal being 9 years old. . . . He is a real Watkins in form & make--looks like Cousin Henry Venable & Grandpa and is a happy child & full of drollery.
>
> Will has two little boys, Hally and Arthur—5 & two years old. It was interesting to see how dear Pa enjoyed his children & grandchildren. . . . I think I never knew one grow old so beautifully. He still misses dear Ma so much and talks of her a great deal. . . .
>
> Please give me Uncle Nat's address. How funny to think he has a daughter married!

These two "Hals"--Henry Brown and Henry Ballantine—probably never knew that they were perpetuating in their given names the old seventeenth century Quaker, Henry Watkins of Henrico.

Six months later Mr. Ballantine died. And in 1887 Mary makes her long-looked-forward-to visit to Prince Edward. Nathaniel misses seeing her. Just before returning to Wisconsin she writes—she who

as a little girl of eleven had gravely scribbled in her first note to him from Washington that she had "seen no one that has enguired after you":

It was my intention when I came to go over to see you, for this visit is for a lifetime I expect. But my time was limited as I have a family & duties. . . . If it hadn't been such a busy season or you had been nearer the depot and the weather had been better I would have gone to see you. . . . I have been much gratified to get acquainted with your Minnie & her husband—and to see your little grandson. . . .

This visit, after an absence of nearly thirty years, has been to me almost like a resurrection from the dead of my old life. I cannot tell you what strange sensations I had at first as the realization of the passage of time and the many changes forced itself upon me. . . . I think Uncle Will & Aunt Kate have changed less than any others I've seen, and Aunt Pattie the most. I have failed to discover in her a look or expression or feature that belonged to my old Pattie—but she has her same kind heart. . . . Aunt Maria looks so old! These cousins whom I had never seen belong very evidently to the family—and I soon feel as if I had always known them. I am very glad that I have made this visit, it will do me good all my life long.

Now dear Uncle and dear Auntie—we will not be troubled because we could not look in each other's faces, pleasant as that would have been. We can and do love each other very dearly. I know some of your trials & sympathize with you most deeply. . . . I know you are thankful for many things you have and that they are the best things this life gives. Love to you both & all your household.

Write to me when I get home to Omro Wisconsin.

There is in the backward-looking of these last letters a sense of resignation and farewell, though only one of those left would die any time soon, and most would live well into the next century.

Sixteen-year-old Asa Watkins, Richard's son, spent the winter of 1888-1889 going to school with Nathaniel's fifteen-year-old Harry at Brookland. He was just preparing with light heart for summer vacation and return to Prince Edward when he wrote to his father on June 2 a letter of shock and grief, touchingly threaded with homesickness:

How differently were yesterday and today spent from what we had planned and looked forward to with so much pleasure!

Yesterday instead of being one of the happiest, was one of the saddest days of my life, for it was then that we buried dear Uncle Nat; & today I spend a sad lonely Sunday here instead of being happy with you all at home as I was so sure I would be.

It was not long after dinner Friday when I went downstairs after packing my trunk and remarked "now I am ready to go home."

Uncle Nat. then perfectly well, better than he had been in several weeks, was talking cheerfully with Aunt Nannie and cousin Daniel Booker in the parlor: I had only been in the porch a little while when Aunt Nannie came calling to cousin Lulie that her father was sick.

Supposing that he had fainted and there being no water in the bucket, I ran to the well--then came the dreadful part, my first attendance on a dying person. We worked on him for some little time, either not knowing or not realizing the awful fact. . . .

It was such a blessing that cousin Dan was with us.

Cousin Daniel Booker had been one of "our boys" with Nathaniel all through the War, had been caught up with him in the vortex of old James Daniel's bankruptcy at Waterloo in 1869, had been one of the devoted members of the Spew Marrow Club. They had been laughing and joking in the parlor; Nathaniel, who was fated to write mainly lugubrious letters on lugubrious occasions, was gay and fun-loving in talk and loved for his anecdotes.

Aunt Nannie seems heart broken, but the storm of almost wild grief has subsided, and she bears it without a murmur: so much better than I thought possible. . . .

It was heart disease; and almost while pleasantly laughing he placed his hand on his heart--the heart which in an instant had ceased to beat and the hand that in a few minutes was lifeless.

Nathaniel Venable
Watkins

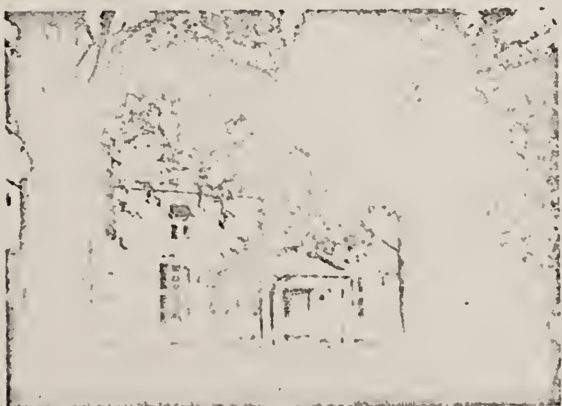
Nancy Venable
Watkins

The Two Virginia Homes of the Letters.

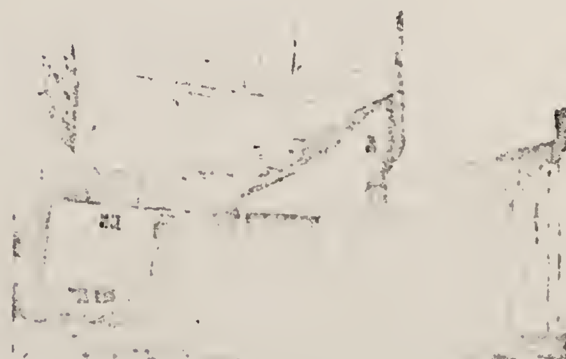
Oldham, Prince Edward, Va.

Slate Hill, Prince Edward, Va.

The Two North Carolina Homes of the Letters.



Waterloo, Granville County, N. C.



Brookland, Granville County, N. C.

APPENDIX

Walter Watkins did not have the correct account of Suzanne Rochet and the Bible. Suzanne inherited the Bible, also a little silver mirror from her grandmother who was a friend of Queen Elizabeth. These were given to Suzanne's grandmother when she was on a visit to England. The Bible and mirror passed down from generation to generation and was finally deposited in the Museum of History in Richmond.

The Woodson story deserves fuller treatment.

In 1619 Sir George Yeardley, new Governor of Virginia, landed in the Ship George at Jamestown, bringing with him 100 immigrants and Dr. John Woodson, physician. He was a graduate of Oxford and was given a considerable grant of land in the bend of the river above Jamestown where he built his home and called it Fleur de Hundreds. He and his wife Sara settled there and in 1644 had two children, John, 12, and Robert 10.

In April the Indians made a sudden attack upon the settlements and killed 300. Dr. John Woodson was killed in sight of his home. Fortunately, a man named Ligon was in the home making shoes for the family. He and Sara barred the house and made it as secure as possible. Then he took the big gun (8 feet long) and killed three Indians with the first shot and two with the second shot, while Sara put Robert under the wash tub and John in the potato hole. It was wash day and there was a cauldron of boiling water in the big old fireplace. Two Indians got on the house to come down the chimney. When the first one came down Sara seized the huge bucket of boiling water and dashed it in his face. That finished him. When the second one came down she killed him with a spit. While she was doing this, Ligon at one shot killed two Indians, making nine in all. That ended the attack.

From then on John's descendants were called "Tater Hole" and Robert "Wash Tub". Their descendants to this day are known as "Tater Hole" Woodsons and "Wash Tub" Woodsons. The boys grew up, flourished and helped populate the earth. Woodsons can be found today everywhere. Henry Morton Woodson's huge volume is a mere beginning. Colonel Richard Woodson married Ann Smith, which gives hundreds of Watkinses, Colonel Richard Cocke of Malvern Hills as ancestor.

Something more should be said about George Read. He married Elizabeth Marteaux. They were the earliest American ancestors of George Washington and also Thomas Nelson, Governor of Virginia during the Revolution.

Nancy Watkins through Col. Augustine Warner and Edm- ... nings, two separate and distinct lines, was a common desc... Robert E. Lee's early American ancestors.

From Sorley's Lewis of Warner Hall published in 1935. ... wrote the following little poem for the Saturday Evening P...

A Pretty Sad Little Song

I'm striving just as hard as I can
To keep myself straight on the L--is clan.
There are Ted, some Johns, and one Sinclair--
You hear about all of them everywhere.
Then, of course, there's Joe,
And a lot you wouldn't know--
Such as Michael, for instance, the grocer's boy -
And there's Senator Lewis, from Illinois.
And one of them writes,
And two of them fights,
And one has connections
With labor defections;
One has a horse, one has a band,
And one makes speeches I can't understand.
But I try my best and do what I can
To keep myself straight on the L--is clan.
--Paul North.

And Jane Daniel Garnet immediately wrote this reply:

I am just as proud as I can be
Of our wonderful, honorable family tree.
With grand-parents 4 and great grand-parents 8
It's almost impossible to keep them all straight.
For the life of me I cannot see
How all these folks can be kin to me.
There are a few twigs on the Lewis bough
I just don't care for anyhow;
That's if you really mean on that branch that Joe
does truly grow;
For that branch I don't give a cuss
If it makes Joe Lewis kin to us.

I find that studying ancestry leads to utterly rediculous facts. My mother and my father were triple third cousins. My mother was my father's third cousin. Being her son I am his fourth cousin three ways and being his son I am my own fifth cousin three ways. Reverse it starting with my father and on his side I am my own fifth cousin three ways, which makes me my own fifth cousin six ways.

(Henry Watkins, to Virginia 1620, Overseer to Lady Dale??)

Henry Watkins, of Henrico, born 1638 at Malvern Hills.

Thomas Watkins, of Swift Creek, died 1760.

Joseph Morton
m. Agnes Woodson

Thomas Watkins, of Chickahominy (1714-1783).
m. Frances Claiborne Anderson

Col. William Morton m. Susannah Watkins

Henry Watkins, of Prince Edward
m. Temperance Hughes

Nathaniel Venable
m. Elizabeth Woodson

Captain Thomas Watkins m. Betsy Anne
(1761-1797

Nancy m. J. Daniel

MILDRED MORTON m. 2 HENRY N. WATKINS
(1789-1875) (1787-1850)
m. 1 Edwin Edmuns

Edwin Edmunds

CHARLES LEWIS READ (1793-1869)
m. Jane Boyd (dau. William Boyd &
Frances Bullock)

Jane Eliza Read m. James Beverly Daniel

BETSY ANN m. ELISHA BALLANTINE

William

RICHARD m. Mary Dupuy

SUSAN m. George Redd

PATTY m. Wm. Scott

NATHANIEL m. NANCY

CHARLES

MARTHA

MILDRED

MARY HENRY LIZZIE ASA

FAMILY CHART

(Writers of Letters in Large Type)

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